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ABSTRACT

Case studies of 12 leading British employers were driven by employers' interest in issues related to working long hours in light of introduction of the Working Time Directive, a European Community initiative enacted into British law that sets limits on working hours per week. Data showed over one-fourth of full-time employees worked over 48 hours per week; men were more likely to work longer hours; and women's hours were increasing. Reasons for working long hours fell into four broad categories: workload, a long hours culture, individual commitment to the job, and need to improve pay. Consequences were increased sickness absence, low morale, and high turnover; lower productivity and quality of work outputs; greater health and safety risks; adverse impacts on family and social life; and reduced employment opportunities for those unable or unwilling to work long hours. The few successful interventions to ameliorate consequences were aimed at changing work patterns and changing individual behavior and company culture. Key elements were early consultation with staff and managers; solutions tackling underlying issues; and implementation that includes commitment and sponsorship for change from the very top, a change agent, the bringing of key people on board, communication and publicity, support and counseling, leading by example, a range of initiatives, effective time management, and message reinforcement and maintenance of momentum. Ongoing monitoring and feedback and evaluation were also seen as vital. (Five case studies provide examples of different types of intervention implemented in a range of contexts. The report contains 19 references.) (YLB)

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J Kodz
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Executive Summary

British employees work some of the longest hours in Europe. A high proportion of UK workers work more than ten hours over and above their contracted hours. This is not an occasional effort to cope with emergencies or peak periods, but rather a regular event.

The European Community's Working Time Directive is focusing attention on the issue of long hours. However, the fundamental business issue is not how best to circumvent the Directive. Rather, it is to understand the causes of long hours, note their consequences, and devise policies to ameliorate them.

People now work regular long hours for a variety of reasons including:

- work pressure arising from heavier workloads, increasingly demanding customers (in particular increased expectation of 24 hours a day service), greater competition, fewer staff and tighter budgets
- individuals feeling a strong commitment towards their work, their colleagues, and customers or clients
- long hours cultures, whereby long hours are interpreted as demonstrating commitment
- a need to improve take-home pay, either through overtime payments, commission, or performance related pay.

The consequences of working long hours are:

- increased sickness absence, low morale and high turnover
- lower productivity and quality of work outputs
- greater health and safety risks
- adverse impacts on family and social life, and community activities

- reduced employment opportunities for those unable or unwilling to work long hours.

There are few examples of instances where employers have been able to successfully tackle long working hours and long hours cultures. Some effective remedial processes are those aimed at:

- changing work patterns, such as:
  - annualised hours
  - revised scheduling and rota schemes
  - flexible working arrangements and job redesign
- changing individual behaviour and company culture, such as:
  - training and development programmes to improve time management and delegation
  - visibly changed top management behaviour and commitment
  - 'go home on time' days to raise awareness of the issue.

Key aspects of successful interventions include:

- early consultation with staff and managers to identify the reasons for working long hours and generate solutions
- solutions which tackle the underlying issues
- commitment and a sponsorship for change from the very top of the organisation
- a change agent with influence to champion the intervention and gain support of key people within the organisation
- bringing the key people on board such as senior management, and stakeholders such as unions
- communication and publicity to raise awareness of the intervention
- support and counselling to staff to help with changes on an individual basis
- managers leading by example
- reinforcing messages and maintaining momentum
- ongoing monitoring and feedback about the intervention and hours worked, and
- evaluation against identified success criteria.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Statistics suggest that the British workforce work some of the longest hours in Europe. In certain organisations and occupations, there is a culture of working long hours. If employees do not participate in this culture, they are likely to be seen as not seriously interested in their work. There are also a number of other pressures which contribute to long working hours, for example:

- delayering and leaner organisations
- the desire to keep costs down and find 'efficiency savings'
- changing technologies, for example the introduction of continuous production techniques
- the growth of a contract culture, and pressures to meet tight deadlines (within budget)
- increased expectation of 24 hours a day service.

Competitiveness and job uncertainty have driven long hours cultures. However, there is increasing concern about the issue, and the European Commission Working Time Directive introduced on 1st October 1998 has focused attention on working hours. Changes in the demographics of the labour market, with more women working, has meant there are greater demands for family friendly policies in the workplace, and more social concerns about the impact of long hours of work on family life. There is evidence that some organisations, but relatively few, have begun to question the effectiveness of long working hours.

1.2 The Working Time Directive

The Working Time Directive (WTD) was laid before Parliament on 30th July 1998 and became law in UK on 1st October 1998. The stated aim of the Directive is to 'improve health and safety at work, by introducing minimum rules for employees relating to daily and weekly rest periods, rest breaks, annual paid leave entitlements, the length of the working week, and on night work' (Directive 93/104/EC). The main requirements include a maximum working week of 48 hours, weekly and daily rest periods, guaranteed three weeks holiday and protection for night workers. A number of sectors are excluded from the regulations, such as mobile workers involved in transport, as well as managing executives and those with autonomous decision-making powers. Individuals can agree with their employer to opt out from the 48 hour limit. Exemptions can also be made through collective workforce agreements, but these cannot alter the 48 hour rule.

The WTD is likely to have a greater impact in the UK than in any of the other 14 EU countries. There is a higher proportion of employees working more than 48 hours per week than in most other member states, and previously in the UK working time was not regulated. Labour market deregulation during the 1980s removed the little legislation there was that protected the working hours of women and young people (Hall and Sisson, 1997).

There has been reported to be concern among employers regarding the WTD, particularly in relation to the time given to comply with the regulations, confusion over definitions, exemptions and derogations, and the cost of implementing appropriate measures (Thatcher, 1998; Whitely, 1998). There is also some concern that opt-out clauses will nullify the requirement of the 48 hour week, and will not necessarily tackle existing cultures of long working hours. However, the WTD is generally welcomed by trade unions. It does seem that the Directive will be a catalyst for a broader re-evaluation of working time patterns and will push working time to the top of the industrial relations agenda (Hall and Sisson, 1997).

We discuss in more detail the purpose, benefits, costs and likely impact of the WTD in Chapter 5; a summary of the main requirements is provided in Appendix 1.

1.3 Objectives of the research

This research was funded by the IES Research Club, through which a group of IES corporate members finance, and often participate in applied research on employment issues. This group of employers were interested in the issues of working hours, long hours cultures and how to address long working hours, particularly in the light of the introduction of the WTD.

The objectives of this research were to examine:

- the reasons for working long hours and what drives a long hours culture
- the effect on organisations and individuals of working long hours
- the introduction of initiatives to reduce working hours, such as changes in working practices and programmes to change individual behaviour, and
- the impact of these measures to reduce or control hours of work.

1.4 Methodology

Our findings are based upon in-depth case study research with 12 leading employers from a range of sectors. These case study employers included those within the financial services, IT, retail, manufacturing and public administration sectors. These were identified through a variety of sources. In the first instance, all members of the IES Research Club who were interested in the research were approached to determine their concerns about long working hours and any steps they had taken to address the issue. Further case study employers, which had made attempts to tackle long hours, were identified through the literature and organisations such as Parents at Work.

The research was undertaken between March and August 1998. We conducted interviews with HR managers within the 12 participating employers, focus groups or one-to-one interviews with employees within eight organisations, and a questionnaire survey with over 150 employee respondents in these eight organisations. In one of the case study organisations, Barclays Technology Services (BTS), more in-depth fieldwork was undertaken; 103 questionnaires were returned from BTS. A further 58 were returned from the other seven organisations. The employee

participants and the questionnaire sample were selected by our contact within each organisation. Our sample is not representative of all employees and therefore the findings need to be interpreted with caution. This research does, however, provide a flavour of the issues relating to long hours.

The interviews with HR managers and one-to-one interviews and focus groups with employees covered a number of areas:

- working hours; what are long hours? who works long hours and why?
- the impact of working long hours, on the staff and the organisation as a whole
- support to limit working hours; what has been done? how this was communicated and implemented, the impact of the intervention and planned next steps.

The short questionnaire completed by employee participants collected details about working hours; how many, when and where additional hours are worked; compensation for extra hours; views about working hours through a series of attitude statements and background biographical information.

1.5 The structure of the report

Chapter 2 examines data on the number of hours worked in the UK and who works long hours, comparing the UK with other European nations.

In Chapter 3 we discuss the reasons for working long hours, and Chapter 4 considers the impact of working long hours both on individual employees and their employers.

In Chapter 5 we look at interventions to tackle long hours, both the WTD and employer initiatives. From the employer case studies conducted for this research, we extrapolate some guidelines for good practice.

In the second section of the report, five of the case studies are presented. These were identified as employers which have taken some steps to address working hours. They provide examples of different types of intervention implemented in a range of contexts.

2 Working Hours

In this chapter we consider a number of issues relating to working hours by examining the existing evidence from Eurostat's *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) data and various other sources, which have looked into the issue of long hours working in the UK, as well as both our interview and survey data.

In the first part of this chapter, we provide an analysis of existing data and research into numbers of hours worked in the UK compared with other European nations. Secondary data on who works long hours, in terms of gender occupation and industrial sector, are also presented. We then turn to our own research findings and examine what our respondents considered to be long working hours. In the final section, we present the findings from our small questionnaire survey, relating to number of hours worked, and compare these data to the secondary data and previous research. We also discuss where, when, and how frequently extra hours are put in, and which groups of staff are most likely to work long hours.

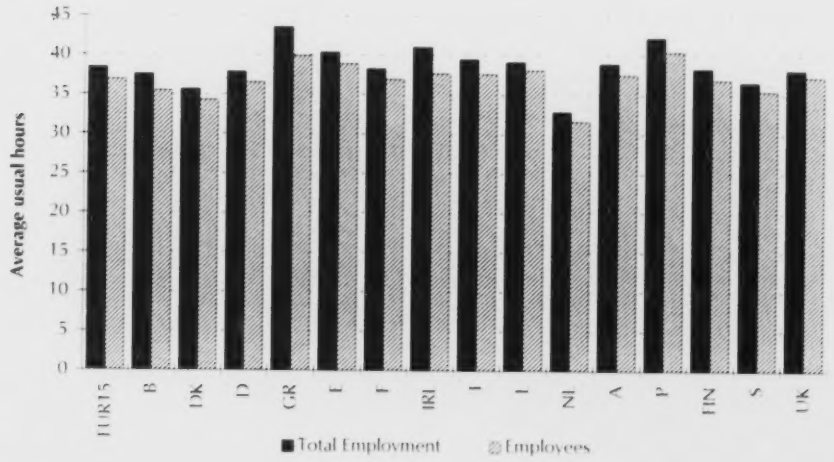
2.1 Working hours: previous research and data evidence

2.1.1 Number of hours worked

In this section, we firstly examine the 1996 LFS results published by Eurostat, and identify a number of key findings with respect to hours worked in the UK compared with the other fourteen EU countries.

Figure 2:1 shows average hours usually worked per week for all people in employment (employees and self employed) and for employees separately. It is clear that the average weekly hours for all people in employment is highest in Greece (43.5 hours

Figure 2:1 Average usual hours of persons in employment and of employees, by EU country, in 1996



B	Belgium	F	France	A	Austria
DK	Denmark	IRE	Ireland	P	Portugal
D	Germany	I	Italy	FIN	Finland
GR	Greece	L	Luxembourg	S	Sweden
E	Spain	NL	Netherlands	UK	United Kingdom

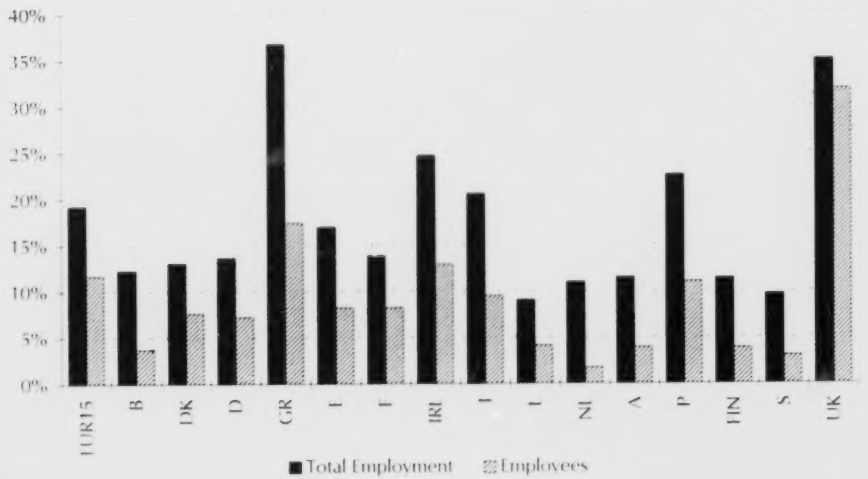
Source: Eurostat, 1997

per week) and for employees it is highest in Portugal (42.2 hours per week). The weekly average in the UK (38.1) for all persons in employment is very similar to the EU average (38.4) and is also close to the EU average for employees (37.3 in the UK, and 36.9 is the EU average).

Employees who work long hours

So what is the evidence for workers in the UK working some of the longest hours in Europe? The Spring 1997 UK *Labour Force Survey* showed that over one-quarter (27 per cent) of full-time employees in employment worked in excess of 48 hours per week, *ie* longer than the Working Time Directive maximum. Self employed people work longer hours. Among the self employed almost one-half were working more than 48 hours per week (LFS, 1997).

Figure 2:2 Proportion of people in employment, and of employees in full-time employment, working more than 46 hours per week, by EU country, in 1996



Source: Eurostat, 1997

In order to examine clearly the pattern of long hours in each country, Eurostat provide data on the proportion of workers working in excess of 46 hours (Eurostat, 1997). Figure 2:2 shows the proportion of persons in full-time employment, and full-time employees who are working at least 46 hours per week in each EU country. These data show that:

- the UK has the highest proportion of full-time employees who are working more than 46 hours per week, compared to all other EU countries
- almost one-third of the UK's full-time employees are working 46 hours and above
- the EU average for employees working more than 46 hours per week is about 12 per cent.

Whilst long hours affects a significant proportion of persons in employment throughout many EU countries — notably Greece, Ireland, Italy and Portugal, as well as the UK — the EC Working Time Directive does not cover self-employed people who are working more than 48 hours a week. In the UK, the vast majority of those who work long hours are employees (*ie* employed by

an employer) and for this reason the WTD is likely to have a significant effect.

There are a number of factors which affect the pattern of hours worked in each country, including statutory regulation and collective bargaining agreements. The UK is known for having a low level of statutory regulation and over the past decade we have seen a fall in collective bargaining agreements. Moreover, prior to the introduction of the WTD, the UK never had any general regulations regarding working time.

Other existing research into long hours

Some previous research into long hours has been based on self selected samples rather than randomly selected samples of employees. These surveys provide an indication of the issues relating to long working hours.

In 1995, Austin Knight UK Ltd, in conjunction with Parents at Work, conducted a survey of 1,269 white collar workers within 22 organisations. This investigated the long hours culture and family friendly employment practices within organisations (Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995). Results from the survey revealed the following key findings with respect to the number of hours worked:

- three-quarters of respondents had contractual hours of between 35 and 37.5 hours per week. Two-thirds worked on average 40 hours or more a week, with 25 per cent working more than 50 hours.
- Eighty-four per cent worked a five day week on average and under ten per cent worked six days or more.

More recently, WFD (Working Family Directions), in association with *Management Today*, carried out a survey of close to 6,000 people (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998). Half of the sample included senior managers or directors, and one-fifth of the sample were board directors. Most respondents were in managerial level jobs or above. With respect to the number of hours worked, this survey found that just over half of their sample were working between 41 and 50 hours each week, and just over one-quarter were working in excess of 51 hours in an average week.

2.1.2 Who works long hours?

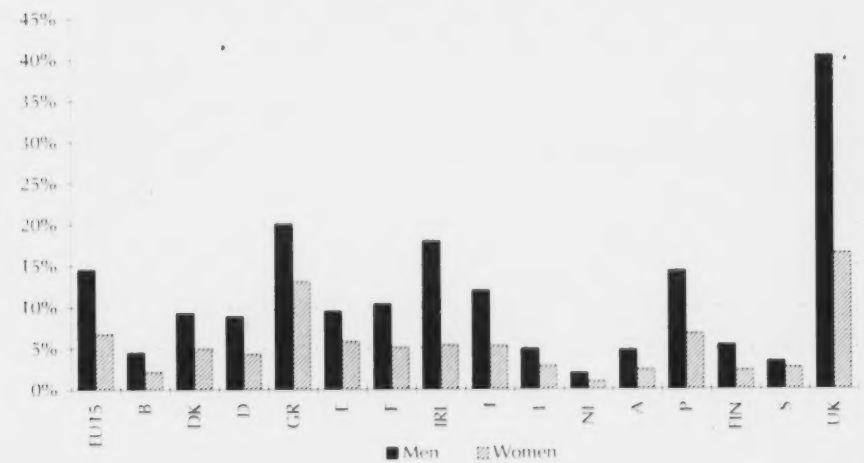
Long hours worked, by gender

UK LFS data shows that a higher proportion of male employees (34 per cent) worked over 48 hours per week than women (14 per cent).

Returning to the European LFS survey data, Figure 2:3 shows full-time employees working at least 46 hours per week, by EU country and by gender. It is clear that in every country, a higher proportion of male employees are working longer hours than female employees. However, a much higher proportion of men work long hours in the UK than in any other EU country.

The Austin Knight Survey also found that men were working longer hours than women (Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995). They found that 81 per cent of men were working in excess of 40 hours per week, compared with 56 per cent of women. The figure was lower for women with children (43 per cent). In addition, two-thirds of those working six days or more per week were men.

Figure 2:3 Full-time employees working 46 hours and above, by country and by gender



Source: Eurostat, 1997

The WFD survey also found that men were working longer hours than women: 53 per cent of men were working between 41 and 50 hours each week, compared with 48 per cent of women. This smaller difference between males and females may be a reflection of the fact that the sample was largely made up of managers, rather than all types of employees. Furthermore, 85 per cent of the sample were male. However, a greater proportion of men were working very long hours. Twenty-eight per cent of men were working in excess of 50 hours on average per week, compared with only 18 per cent of women (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998).

Long hours worked by industrial sector

Again returning to the LFS data, Table 2:1 compares the proportion of full-time employees working at least 46 hours per week in the UK, with the average for the 15 EU countries, by industrial sector.

A number of points are highlighted by these data.

- It is clear that the proportion working long hours is higher in the UK compared with the average for all EU countries in each industrial sector.

Table 2:1 Average proportion of full-time employees usually working more than 46 hours and above per week, by industrial sector (per cent)

Industrial sector	UK	EU
Mining and quarrying	45.2	21.4
Manufacturing	53.7	14.8
Electricity, gas and water	34.5	10.4
Construction	28.0	7.2
Wholesale and retail trade, repairs	33.3	14.6
Hotels and restaurants	31.8	25.1
Transport and communication	44.6	16.9
Financial intermediation	19.5	9.6
Real estate and business activities	31.8	14.2
Public administration	20.0	7.3
Other services	28.0	10.1

Source: Eurostat, 1997

- The highest proportion of employees working long hours in the UK (over one-half) is found to be in the manufacturing sector. Mining and quarrying, and the transport and communication sectors, are also associated with long hours working. The lowest proportion working long hours (about one-fifth) are found to be in the financial and intermediary sector in the UK.
- The highest average proportion of those working long hours for all EU countries, on the other hand, is in the hotels and services industry (25.1 per cent). The lowest proportion is found to be in the construction industry (7.2 per cent), closely followed by public administration (7.3 per cent).

The Austin Knight survey also found considerable differences at the industry level: 80 per cent of respondents in the manufacturing, engineering and technical sector worked in excess of 40 hours (Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995). Almost one-third of this group worked 50 hours or more compared to about one-eighth in financial services and only one-tenth in local government.

The WFD survey found that respondents in the private sector were working longer hours than their counterparts in the public sector. Fifty-five per cent of their respondents in the private sector worked between 41 and 50 hours on average each week compared with 46 per cent in the public sector (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998).

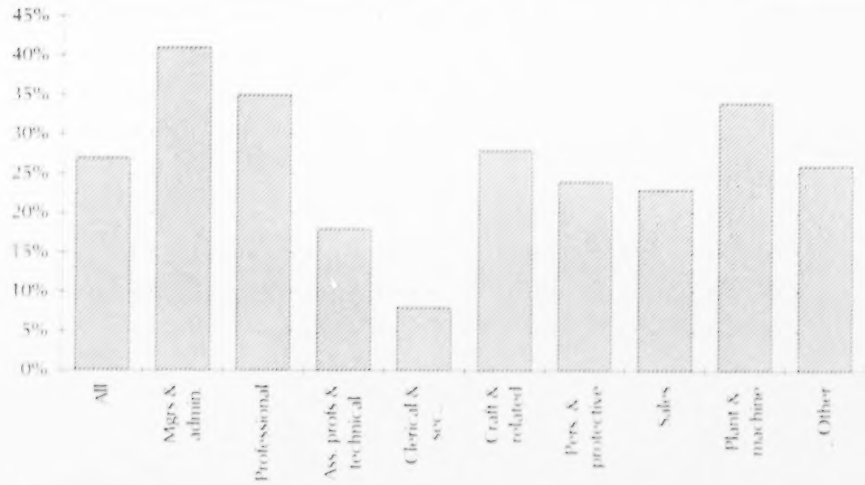
Hours worked, by occupation

Figure 2:4 shows that managers and professionals are the occupations in which employees are most likely to work more than 48 hours per week (LFS, 1997). Over 40 per cent of managers work over 48 hours per week. However, some of this group of employees may not be covered by the EC Working Time Directive (see Appendix 1). We can also see that plant and machine operatives work long hours, with over one-third working over 48 hours in 1997.

2.1.3 Change in working hours over time

UK *Labour Force Survey* data shows that the proportion of the workforce working long hours has increased in recent years. In 1990, one-fifth of employees in employment worked more than 48 hours per week, compared with over one-quarter in 1997. However, a recent survey has revealed an easing in the percentage of managers working more than their contracted

Figure 2:4 Proportion of full-time employees usually working more than 48 hours and above per week, by occupation, in the UK



Source: Labour Force Survey Spring 1997

hours over the last year (Worral and Cooper, 1998). This report suggests that there has been a slight change in attitudes, and managers are considering their home life to be more important than their career.

2.2 What are long hours?

Having presented data from previous research and the LFS, we now turn to consider our case study findings. In our research, we have defined long hours working as continually working more than contracted hours, rather than occasional peaks in working hours. There was an acceptance by most employees we interviewed that they would work a number of extra hours each week above their contractual hours. Nearly all employees in our survey agreed that working long hours was sometimes necessary to finish an urgent piece of work. Also, certain functions are required to work extra hours at certain times of the year, *eg* year end in finance and accounts departments. These peaks in workload were not perceived to be a problem. However, working long hours on an ongoing and consistent basis, with no time for recovery, was.

Three-quarters of respondents to our small questionnaire survey[1] agreed with the statement: 'some of my colleagues are working too many hours'. However, their perception of what constituted long hours clearly varied. For example, one manager was working fifty hours per week but did not consider this to be long hours. Another told us:

> *'I do not see working, say, five extra hours per week as excessive.'*

Another respondent felt that 60 hours per week on a continual basis was excessive. In some instances, individuals regularly worked over 70 hours per week and sometimes up to 100. Perceptions about long hours did seem to vary according to the type of work they were doing, and what was considered to be the norm for that type of work. In some cases, it was not known how many hours employees worked, especially if people took work home. One employee who felt she worked long hours described her working pattern, although some of this involved travel to work time.

> *'I'm not getting home until about nine o'clock at night some nights, and leaving at half-past six in the morning, so it is an awfully long day.'*

There appeared to be a consensus that working a few extra hours over and above contracted hours did not necessarily mean long hours. However, in general, it appears that consistently working an additional ten hours or more per week, was considered to be long hours.

2.3 Working long hours: our research findings

2.3.1 Number of hours worked

The small survey of employees participating in our study show that, not surprisingly, the contractual hours varied between employer. Respondents from BTS who make up two-thirds of our sample were, on the whole, contracted to work a 35 hour

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[1] The results from our small questionnaire survey are intended to give a flavour of the issues relating to working hours. As the responses from Barclays Technology Services (BTS) dominate our sample we have decided to break up our results into two groups: 'BTS' and 'all others'.

week. One-fifth of our remaining respondents from other organisations were contracted to work between 41 and 48 hours, and a further fifth were contracted to work 48 hours.

Nearly ninety per cent of these questionnaire respondents reported that they had worked more than their contractual hours over the previous three months. In all organisations visited (except for one, where there was not a long hours culture) many of the individuals had worked an extra eight or more hours per week over the previous three months, and some had worked more than 14 hours. Our findings suggest that within the employers visited, around one-fifth of the respondents worked more than 48 hours per week.

Table 2:2 shows a breakdown of the extra hours worked by BTS employees, and employees in all other organisations. We can see that almost one-fifth of respondents from BTS were working between eight and 14 extra hours per week, and a further 14 per cent were working over 14 additional hours per week. It is also clear that a higher proportion of employees were working longer hours in the other employers, on average, compared with BTS. These findings suggest a lower proportion of BTS employees work long hours compared to the UK as whole, as shown by the LFS data.

In contrast, our sample from all other organisations show similar proportions working long hours as compared with the LFS data and two previous surveys (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998; Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995). Table 2:3 reports the frequency of working these additional hours.

Table 2:2 Average number of additional hours worked per week, over the previous three months (per cent)

No. of extra hours	BTS	All other organisations
Less than 4	30	13
4 to 7	37	24
8 to 14	19	31
Over 14	14	22
N = those who worked extra hours	97	45

Source: IES Survey

Table 2:3 How often extra hours are worked (per cent)

Frequency	BTS	All other organisations
Every day	13	16
Most days	45	47
Once or twice per week	35	24
Once per fortnight or less often	6	11
N = those who worked extra hours	97	45

Source: IES Survey

2.3.2 When and where extra hours are worked

The employees we spoke to reported that they were most likely to have been working extra hours in the early evening in all our case study employers. Table 2:4 below reports the results from our survey showing when the additional hours were worked. Indeed, approximately seven out of ten respondents worked additional hours in the early evening. About half of all employees reported that they worked extra hours in the morning. Respondents were least likely to have worked additional hours at weekends, although this still accounted for a sizeable proportion of responses: 29 per cent of respondents from BTS, and 39 per cent of respondents from all other employers.

Our findings support to some extent the results from the Austin Knight survey which also found that the majority of their sample were working extra hours after work (almost two-thirds) and only a very small number worked additional hours at weekends (Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995).

Table 2:4 When extra hours are worked (per cent)

Time of day	BTS	All other organisations
Early morning	51	50
Lunch times	57	41
Early evenings	70	68
Late evenings	36	30
Weekends	29	39
N = those who worked extra hours (multiple responses allowed)	97	45

Source: IES Survey

In addition, our results suggested that employees were most likely to have worked these extra hours at work rather than at home (98 per cent of respondents in BTS and the same proportion in other employers), although there was some evidence of home working (36 per cent in BTS and 39 per cent in other employers). Recent research has shown that the proportion of managers working from home is increasing (Worral and Cooper, 1998).

2.3.3 Compensation for extra hours worked

Almost two-thirds of employees in BTS were compensated for the extra hours which they worked, whereas only 36 per cent of employees from the other group were compensated. A closer look at the figures revealed that in one company only a small proportion of employees had been compensated for working extra hours, which lowered the overall average for the 'all others' group. Indeed, the average proportion for 'all others' was closer to about one-half of employees being compensated.

The most frequent response from employees in BTS as to how they were being compensated was via flexitime, and in other employers it was time off in lieu. Where flexitime was operating, it was generally not available to those in more senior positions.

Approximately two-thirds of employees who were being compensated, were being compensated for all/some of the additional hours, which they had worked. As one manager explained, it was the 'utopia' that they take time off in lieu, but in practice staff may not be able to do so. Where flexitime was operating, some respondents complained that the system did not compensate for all the extra hours worked.

> *'We operate a flexi system, which allows you to carry ten hours over each month. Last month I had over 40 additional hours on my clock, 14 were paid as overtime, ten were carried over, and I effectively "lost" two days.'*

Some of our interviewees felt that practice varied within organisations as to the extent to which extra hours were compensated. In some cases there were informal arrangements. One individual had a manager who let his or her staff take time off during the day, or allowed staff to come in late in the morning if they had been working late the previous evening. Another explained that:

> *'There have been instances where I have worked very long hours and been in the office all weekend. In some cases I was able to*

claim overtime for this but in other cases I wasn't. This was due to working with different managers who had different attitudes regarding overtime.'

2.3.4 Who works long hours?

We now analyse our questionnaire survey data by gender, occupation, age and dependants.

Gender

Our questionnaire survey findings (see Table 2:5) reflect previous research and LFS data in that a higher proportion of men were working longer hours than women.

Occupation

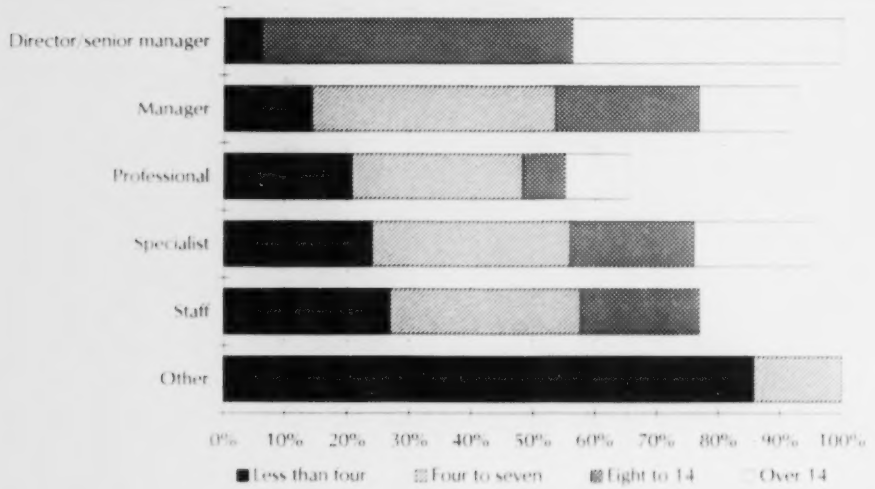
Mirroring previous research, there was also some evidence from our interviews to suggest that working long hours increases with seniority within organisations. This appeared to be a particular problem in the Civil Service. Moreover, there appeared to be an expectation of senior grades that they would work long hours despite the fact that they would not be compensated. In one private sector organisation, one manager told us working long hours 'comes with the territory'. In fact, the wording of managers contracts in some organisations stated that they were expected to do the hours to meet the demands of the job. Managers in the retail sector, and employees in sales positions, were also particularly prone to working long hours.

Table 2:5 Proportion working a number of additional hours per week over the previous three months, by gender (per cent)

No. of extra hours	All employers	
	Females	Males
None	9	9
Less than four	25	20
Four to seven	33	27
Eight to fourteen	19	17
Over fourteen	11	39
N = whole sample	*57*	*104*

Source: IES Survey

Figure 2:5 Additional hours worked, by occupation



Source: IES Survey

Figure 2:5 illustrate the results from our questionnaire survey, which also shows that a higher proportion of directors/senior managers were working long hours compared with other staff.

In a number of organisations the respondents in our sample reported that there were 'hot spots' within the organisation, with certain departments or groups of staff working very long hours, on an ongoing basis. Examples of the types of departments were those directly providing a service to customers and middle managers, often having been slimmed down in scale and squeezed between the demands of top management and the drive for efficiency. Other areas were those with specialist skills such as IT. We also found cases of individual employees who were perceived to be indispensable in their jobs, who were continually working very long hours.

Long hours and age

Results from our questionnaire survey suggest that hours of work are positively correlated with age. Results from BTS and for 'all others' both showed that those aged over 35 were more likely to work long hours than younger staff. The likely

explanation is also highly correlated with seniority within an organisation.

Long hours and dependants

Our respondents were asked whether they had any dependent children living with them, or whether they had caring responsibilities for an elderly relative or other adult. Our findings at BTS (where the sample is large enough to analyse) showed that employees with dependants were working longer hours, than those without. However, women with children or other dependants were less likely to work long hours.

2.3.5 Change in working hours

Our research found more than half of our respondents felt that the pressure to work long hours was increasing. One interviewee described a trend whereby staff work until 7.30pm, but whereas in the past this was compensated for by coming in at 10am, now they start at 8am. Another commented that:

> *'The long hours culture has increased significantly over the past couple of years. There have been short periods where I've had to work 90 hours a week, but typically my hours have increased from 50 to 60.'*

2.4 Summary

National data shows that over one-quarter of full-time employees in the UK work in excess of 48 hours per week, *ie* longer than the Working Time Directive weekly working hours limit (*Labour Force Survey*, 1997). Furthermore, British employees work some of the longest hours in Europe.

The national statistics also show that men are more likely to work longer hours than women, but this overall trend disguises differences by occupation. Women's hours are increasing as more women are entering more senior positions. The types of sectors and occupations where long hours are a particular problem include plant and machine operatives, transport and communication workers, managers and professionals.

For the purposes of our research, we have defined long hours as working more than contracted hours on a consistent and ongoing

basis, rather than occasional peaks in working hours. Our small survey showed that perceptions about the number of hours which constitute long hours varies according to the type of work and what is considered the norm within the particular place of work. Furthermore, many of our survey respondents were unaware of how many hours were worked, either due to work being taken home, or lack of clarity as to what was considered to be work, *ie* does it include entertaining or travelling for work? However, in general, it appears that consistently working an additional ten or more hours per week was considered to be long hours by most respondents.

Among these respondents, one-fifth reported that they worked more than an extra 14 hours per week (in organisations other than BTS). Well over half worked extra hours every day or most days. Our respondents were generally of the opinion that pressure to work long hours was increasing.

In terms of who works long hours, the IES survey findings generally reflected the national data. However, one point highlighted by the research was that women with dependants were much less likely to work long hours, whereas men living with children or a dependent adult were significantly more likely to work long hours. In a number of organisations, respondents reported that there were 'hot spots' within the organisation, with certain departments or groups of staff working very long hours on an ongoing basis. Examples of the types of departments were those directly providing a service to customers and middle managers, often having been slimmed down in scale and squeezed between the demands of top management and the drive for efficiency. We also found cases of individual employees who were perceived to be indispensable in their jobs, who were continually working very long hours.

3 Reasons for Working Long Hours

We have defined long hours working as working excessive hours on a continual and constant basis, rather than occasional peaks to meet specific deadlines. We have also shown in Chapter 2 that for many of our respondents hours have increased in recent years. In order to address long hours, it is important to understand why these extra hours are being worked. In this chapter we turn to consider the reasons for working long hours. This discussion draws from our in-depth interview data and questionnaire survey results, as well as some previous research.

Broadly, the reasons for working long hours fall into four broad categories:

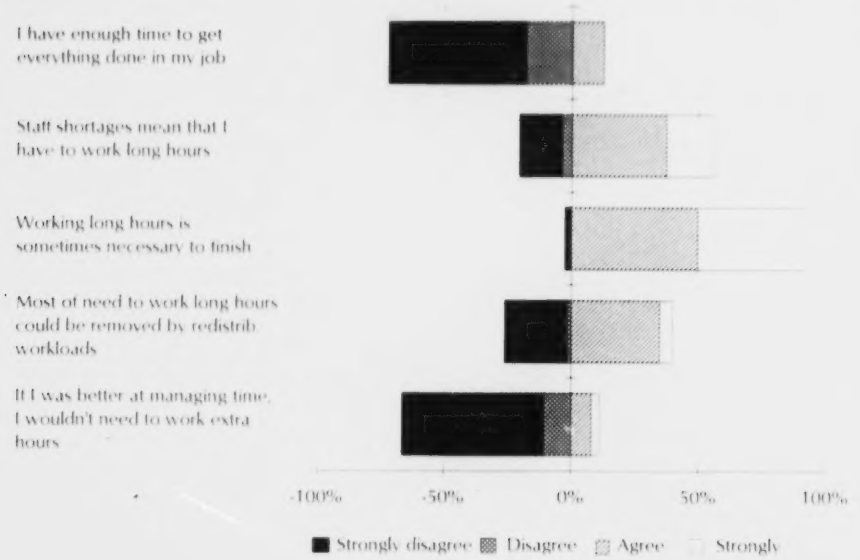
- workload
- a long hours culture
- individual commitment to the job, and
- a need to improve pay.

We discuss each of these in turn in the following sections.

3.1 Workload

Workload and work pressure through, for example, tight deadlines, seem to be the primary reason for working additional hours. We show in Figure 3:1 the questionnaire responses to a series of attitude statements relating to workload, work organisation and working long hours. Across the organisations surveyed, ninety per cent of the questionnaire respondents did not feel that they had enough time to get everything done in their job within normal working hours. We show in Table 3:1 that the more extra hours these employees worked, the more

Figure 3:1 Employees' views on reasons for working long hours: workload and work organisation


I have enough time to get everything done in my job
Staff shortages mean that I have to work long hours
Working long hours is sometimes necessary to finish
Most of need to work long hours could be removed by redistrib workloads
If I was better at managing time, I wouldn't need to work extra hours
-100%
-50%
0%
50%
100%
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly

Source: IES Survey

likely they were to feel there was a lack of time within normal working hours. These differences in views on workload by average number of extra hours worked per week are statistically significant, indicating that there is a link between workload and working long hours.

Workloads seemed to drive up working hours because employees had too much to do or because they wanted to complete tasks on time so that they can move on to the next piece of work. Many respondents felt that they needed to work long hours to complete all the activities necessary to meet their responsibilities. Examples of responses were:

> *'There is too much paperwork. I can't lead, manage and read it all in seven hours per day.'*

> *'The amount of paper in your in-tray and workload drives the long hours. The amount of work crossing our desks is increasing.'*

Table 3:1 Employees' views on workload, by average number of extra hours worked per week (per cent)

'I have enough time to get everything done in my job within normal working hours'	Total	Avg. no. extra hours worked per week			
		None	<4	4-7	≥8
Strongly agree/agree	12	40	26	2	2
Neither agree or disagree	13	13	20	15	9
Strongly disagree/disagree	72	47	54	83	89
Mean score	*2.2*	*2.9*	*2.7*	*2.0*	*1.9*
N = all respondents	*161*	*15*	*35*	*46*	*54*

Note: the nearer the mean score to five the higher the rating. Three is a mid-scale score.

Source: IES Survey

We were told in one organisation that some employees, in particular middle managers, would stay at work to finish paperwork when another employee was dependent on it. Other respondents told us that a reason for working long hours was that they liked to keep on top of their workload, otherwise there would be difficulties catching up. Another example of this desire to complete work was:

> *'I find it easier to work late and go home knowing that it is done, than to carry work in my mind after arriving home.'*

Previous research has also noted that pressure to perform at work was a reason for working long hours, and that this pressure from the top extends down through organisations (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998). This research found that two-thirds of the managers surveyed felt they were expected to ask more and more from their staff. These respondents thought they pushed their staff too hard to meet targets. Our research confirmed that work pressure often comes down from the top of organisations. The need to meet targets and a constant drive for greater efficiency and continuous improvement were also noted as generating work pressure. For example, in the Civil Service, we were told that workloads were driven by Ministers' agenda:

> *'Ministers work phenomenally long hours, 18 hour days are normal and staff are influenced by that, especially with the new Government with a very ambitious agenda.'*

This work pressure clearly affects people in particular roles or parts of a business. We have already noted in Chapter 2 that managers and senior managers are particularly affected by long hours working. Our small questionnaire survey showed that directors and senior managers were least likely to feel they had sufficient time to get everything done in their jobs within normal working hours. None of this group agreed with this statement, followed by managers and specialists (of whom approximately one in ten agreed with the statement). We have found that key members of staff, with specialist skills or particular experience can be under particular pressure. For example, those with IT skills who need to work to fit in with people and/or machine downtime. Examples of responses were:

> *'Although I do not believe the organisation puts undue pressure on people to work long hours, my personal belief is that in some roles it is necessary, and I don't believe that in general, management can get through all their work in 35 hours per week.'*

> *'Colleagues who are invaluable work, in my opinion, far too many hours. I am worried once I have gained their knowledge that I will be expected to work similar hours.'*

There are a number of reasons for these increasing workloads, which we now discuss in further detail.

3.1.1 Providing a service to customers

Serving customer needs and the need to be available to provide a service to customers are particular issues leading to greater workloads. Customer expectations are being raised and there is a demand for greater public access to services at all times of the day, for example 24 hour banking and supermarket extended opening hours. In retail, for example, we found that some managers felt unable to go home and leave their job while the store was open. In the estate agency business, peak demand can be before the normal working day begins and after it has finished, and staff work longer hours to meet this demand in order to compete with other estate agencies. The following quotes illustrate the impact of increasing customer expectations:

> *'Increase in client expectations in recent years for near 100 per cent network availability means changes must be applied outside business hours, often at weekends or overnight. Service disruptions are not tolerated as they used to be.'*

'In a customer focused, quality and improvement-focused organisation, you have to be prepared to work more than your contracted hours, particularly when the organisation is under continual pressure to reduce input costs, at the same time increasing quality and quantity of output.'

3.1.2 Staff shortages

Approximately half of the respondents to our small survey felt that staff shortages were a reason for working long hours. One employee reported that she had worked every Saturday for the last three months due to a lack of staff cover. In some organisations, restructuring and delayering had resulted in increased workloads. Within flatter structures, some managers felt there was a lack of people to whom they could delegate, who they could trust to get the job done. An example of this inability to delegate is illustrated by the following response:

'You can't delegate because you are the only one who knows how to do it. You don't want to come in the next morning to find the job hasn't been done properly; you'd feel let down, so you stay late to make sure it is done.'

In a bank, the retail network staff had been reduced and roles changed, whereby banks operated more like retail outlets. As a result, workloads had increased.

A number of the organisations had downsized dramatically. As one HR manager put it, these reductions in staff do not necessarily lead to long hours, as new technology has been introduced and systems streamlined to increase efficiency. However, there was a feeling among our respondents that staff were having to do more work. This leads on to further points made relating to technology and workloads, discussed below.

In some cases, cost cutting exercises also meant less training for the staff remaining, which reduced their ability to do their job effectively.

3.1.3 Technology

The introduction of new technology was given as another reason for driving up working hours. In the manufacturing sector, this related to 24 hour operations. In office based work, it was reported to us that new technology such as e-mail allows more

efficient working and therefore more output is expected. E-mail also leads to more information to deal with. As one respondent put it, e-mail leads to ever more information, which is available at all times of the day.

3.1.4 Project and contract based work

In organisations where there was a large amount of project and contract based work, for example where there were short lead-in times and tight deadlines to meet, this was also felt to drive up working hours. As we found in one organisation, this type of work can lead to an attitude whereby as long as the task is done, the end justifies the means. We were also told about the existence of project managers who expected their project to take precedence. This made it difficult for staff to prioritise their work when they were working for a number of project managers.

Project work can also result in peaks in workloads. We show in Figure 3:1 that nearly all our respondents agreed working long hours was sometimes necessary to finish an urgent piece of work, and this is not generally perceived to be a problem. However, as illustrated by the following quote, these extra hours can sometimes be excessive and continue for an extended period of time:

> *'My team worked on a project between 1995 and 1997, where 60 hour weeks were the norm, with weekend working of 24 hours on top of this being expected once per month. The project has now gone live and we are now going through the "lull" before the next storm.'*

> *'Workloads do not remain constant. For example, I worked 20 extra hours last week while approaching a deadline; this week I won't work any.'*

In retail, managers hours can be affected by one-off promotions and initiatives, especially those which are accompanied by targets and deadlines. In one organisation we surveyed, staff told us there was no time allowed for project work which was additional to their normal responsibilities. For example, there was a requirement among some production technicians to work on project work on top of normal shifts. Also, ironically, one employer told us that staff working groups, for example to look at work pressure, could increase workloads for staff, when no extra time was allowed for them to contribute to these initiatives.

3.1.5 Travel

An increasing need to travel as a result of a greater geographic span of control in work was also cited as driving up working hours. In some cases, employees are able to take time off in lieu for travel. In others, it is expected that it is done in their own time:

> *'My job requires significant amounts of travelling, most of which is done outside my contracted hours.'*

For some respondents the need to travel was due to the globalisation of business. For example, as markets extend, there is a growing need to travel abroad. In others, it was because of a spread of the employers' own sites. One employee's team was split between the North and South of England, which meant she frequently needed to fly to another part of the country to attend meetings.

3.1.6 Work organisation

As shown in Figure 3:1, fewer than half of respondents felt that there was scope for reducing the need to work long hours by redistributing workloads. Very few thought that if they were better at managing their time they would be able to avoid working long hours. These findings further suggest that workload is perceived to be the primary driver for long hours and respondents feel the problem cannot necessarily be addressed by better time management.

However, prioritisation of work tasks was felt to be a particular issue in some of the organisations. As one respondent put it, they were a 'can do' organisation and there was a culture of always saying 'yes' to requests. Another employer felt they made 'knee jerk' responses to requests for work, with little consideration for priorities.

Previous research has found poor work organisation to be a reason for working long hours (Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995; WFD and *Management Today*, 1998). For example, the survey by WFD found that 40 per cent of managers thought that in their organisation working long hours had more to do with inefficiency than the workload involved. Our respondents also thought that bad management and poor decision making led to increased workloads and consequently longer working hours:

'I often feel the need [for long hours] arises through cost cutting and bad project management.'

In one organisation, unnecessary layers of management were felt to create extra work. Another respondent reported that long hours were caused by:

'. . . the design of my job where I report to three different directors, meetings and activities driven by them do not fall neatly into the diary.'

Another issue was a lack of awareness of how long it takes to carry out tasks. In some organisations, it was reported that projects were not costed out in terms of the time it would take to do them. It was noted that this poor understanding of time required was a particular issue for part-time workers. One organisation felt they were not good at designing the 'size' of part-time jobs. They did not have a clear view of the workload which a part-timer could be expected to carry out, whereas they knew the 'size' of a 41 hour per week job. This lack of understanding often leads to part-timers working extra hours. This is exacerbated by colleagues' lack of awareness, *eg* arranging meetings outside the contracted hours of part-time workers.

Meetings and a working environment which makes it difficult to carry out certain tasks during the day, can also increase pressure and extend working hours. Individuals may work late when it is quieter and they can catch up with work without being interrupted:

'Most of my working day I spend in meetings. The time spent managing my team and project responsibilities is affected, therefore working evenings can at times be essential.'

Some of the organisations we went to felt they had a 'meetings culture'. This made it difficult for individuals to manage their time, and preparation for meetings created additional work. In public sector organisations, we were told there was a particular need for meetings for consensus building, in order to put a single view to Ministers in policy work. Local government officers often need to attend council meetings outside working hours. In one organisation, it was felt there was an element of staff holding meetings for a break or because they were unsure what to do, and thereby wasting everyone else's time. Some respondents commented that meetings which were ill prepared, with no agenda, no time frame and a lack of consideration of

whether people really needed to be there, also led to inefficiencies.

There was a sense that this pattern of working long hours was self reinforcing. Individual inefficiencies were also noted, in particular staff getting used to working long hours and spreading work accordingly. We also found examples of individuals' jobs expanding and expectations being raised because they had worked long hours in the past. For example:

> *'I started using Saturday afternoon to pop in for a couple of hours to finish off reports when I couldn't be disturbed. But this soon turned into "well, I'm coming Saturday anyway so I can leave this until then and do a bit more". The next thing I knew I was working virtually every Saturday and Sunday!'*

3.2 A long hours culture

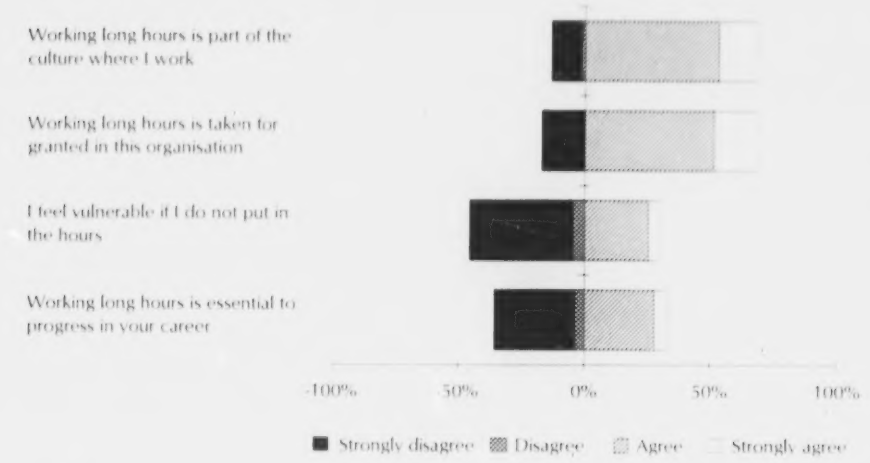
We show in Figure 3:2 that about two-thirds of employees responding to our small survey felt that long hours were part of the culture of where they work. A similar proportion agreed that working long hours was taken for granted in the organisation in which they worked. This is a higher proportion than was found in a previous survey by Austin Knight, which found that over half of white collar workers they surveyed thought there was a long hours culture where they worked (Austin Knight UK Ltd).

In Table 3:2 we show that those employees we surveyed who worked the longest hours were most likely to agree that a long hours culture existed within their organisation. This may suggest that there is a link between an existence of a long hours culture and working very long hours. A high proportion of the small group of employees who worked no extra hours perceived that a long hours culture existed at their place of work, although they were not affected by it.

3.2.1 What characterises a long hours culture

Our respondents were asked how they would describe this culture and about what constituted a long hours culture. Many respondents talked about long hours being valued within organisations, individuals being praised for working long hours, and working extra hours being viewed as a sign of commitment. In a previous survey of managers, it was found

Figure 3:2 Employees' views on reasons for working long hours: culture and insecurity


Working long hours is part of the culture where I work
Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation
I feel vulnerable if I do not put in the hours
Working long hours is essential to progress in your career
-100%
-50%
0%
50%
100%
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

Source: IES Survey

Table 3:2 Employees' views on long hours cultures, by average number of extra hours worked per week (per cent)

Working long hours is part of the culture where I work	Total	Avg. no. of extra hours worked per week			
		None	<4	4-7	≥8
Strongly agree/agree	68	75	50	75	80
Neither agree or disagree	16	19	24	11	14
Strongly disagree/disagree	13	6	27	15	5
Mean score	3.7	3.8	3.2	3.8	3.9
N = all respondents	*161*	*15*	*34*	*47*	*56*

Source: IES Survey

that two-thirds of these respondents felt that working long hours was often confused with commitment (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998).

In one organisation we visited, a long hours culture was described as being an expectation of employees to get the job done, irrespective of the contracted working hours. Long hours were perceived as 'part of the job' and not doing this was seen as a sign that the employee was not committed. Here, there was also felt to be a 'bums on seats culture' as well, whereby managers were reluctant to allow employees to work from home. This indicates a lack of trust and a perception that as long as employees are present at work, they are perceived to be working effectively.

In another organisation, a long hours culture was described as characterised by consistently working more than ten extra hours per week, as well as more subtle things, such as staff worrying about their commitment to the job if they go home at 5.30pm, and attendance being seen as substitute for effectiveness. We were told that comments were made if individuals were not putting in the hours. In a few of the organisations, we were told that even though senior managers were trying to discourage long hours, this was perceived by staff as window dressing and in fact managers valued the long hours worked. We also found it required great strength of character and assertiveness not to work long hours where this kind of culture existed, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *'I find you have to be forceful in saying "no" when you really don't have the time for extra work sometimes.'*

In another organisation respondents felt that a desire to work fewer hours was interpreted as a weakness and a lack of caring for the job and the product. An extreme form of a long hours culture which was thought to exist in some organisations was a culture to 'live to work rather than work to live.'

Many respondents felt the long hours culture was a British phenomenon rather than an organisational culture. Respondents we spoke to from other parts of Europe felt that in other countries, working long hours was viewed as a sign of individuals being inefficient.

> *'The UK culture and the culture of this organisation is to do more with less.'*

We identified a number of factors which appeared to drive these long hours cultures, summarised in the following sections.

3.2.2 Managers' behaviour

There was a perception within many of the organisations we visited that because senior management work long hours, there was an expectation that others should follow their example. Line managers were also felt to reinforce this culture. For example, one respondent had a manager who lived to work, who set the pace of the department. There was a perception that:

> *'. . . if he's still there you can't go home . . . if he's doing it I can do it.'*

Managers' behaviour does not just relate to the example set by working long hours but also the amount of work they can generate.

We found a number of examples of employees perceiving that their managers expected them to work long hours. Some felt that managers failed to understand the consequences of expecting others to work the same pattern as they did. Examples of comments were:

> *'Managers in certain departments are very aggressive towards their staff and even though their staff are giving commendable results they always put pressure on for more, no matter the risks to staff health . . . .'*

> *'My manager works long hours and I feel as though it is expected of me to do the same.'*

However, the managers we spoke to were experiencing difficulty in discouraging long hours. In particular, it was felt that if an individual delivers but works long hours to do so, it is hard not to give this recognition and praise.

3.2.3 Colleagues' behaviour

Peer pressure can also generate a culture of long hours. In one organisation, people felt they were not pulling their weight, or were being disloyal to their colleagues, if they kept to their contracted hours. One respondent thought that it was not so much that the employer expected staff to work long hours, but more that individuals thought that it was expected, then put

pressure on themselves to do so. Comments from colleagues such as 'working half day?' or 'thanks for dropping in', when people leave work on time, were also thought to put pressure on individuals. Colleagues' lack of understanding and insensitivity can be a particular issue for those working part time, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *'The overall culture within the organisation puts pressure on you to be available longer hours . . . also because I finish at 3pm people book meetings and workshops for full afternoons or late afternoon and you are continually raising the profile of your "unavailability" by having to cancel or rearrange these events. Basically, you end up doing a full-time job in part-time hours.'*

In another organisation, we were told that employees saw long hours as a positive thing — it was considered to be 'macho'. There was also an element of competition with other employees in terms of the hours they worked. For example, in an organisation where flexitime operated, it was noted that there was an implicit 'badge of honour' awarded to whoever had worked the most additional hours each month.

3.2.4 To get promoted or rewarded

A perception that it was essential to work long hours to progress was quite wide spread among our respondents. Respondents talked about presenteeism and the need to be seen to be appreciated or rewarded. The following quotes provide examples of this:

> *'Long hours are a factor of this industry and if you want to succeed you have to work them.'*

> *'(In the past) it was very much the case that those who were working the long hours got promotion, not those who managed their time better and were more effective and productive.'*

We also heard of instances where people were working late hours rather than long hours. This was described as an attempt to look as if they were working long hours, in order to demonstrate commitment.

In one organisation, there was a performance culture, which was reinforced by the performance related profit share scheme in the organisation. This was thought to reinforce the long hours culture. We return to this point in Section 3.4.

3.2.5 Insecurity

We show in Figure 3:2 that almost one-third of the respondents to our survey felt vulnerable if they did not put in as many hours as their colleagues. This is a similar proportion to that found by Austin Knight's survey of white collar workers (Austin Knight, 1995). This sense of vulnerability may drive up working hours, when individuals wish to prove their indispensability and in turn contribute to a long hours culture within an organisation.

3.2.6 Who is affected

The long hours culture seemed to be a particular problem for some departments or groups of employees. In some organisations it was felt that certain departments had a reputation for long hours. However, the groups most affected appeared to be middle and senior managers. Our questionnaire survey findings show that most senior managers agreed that there was a long hours culture where they worked. Many senior managers felt that they were expected to work long hours and long hours were the norm. Examples of comments were:

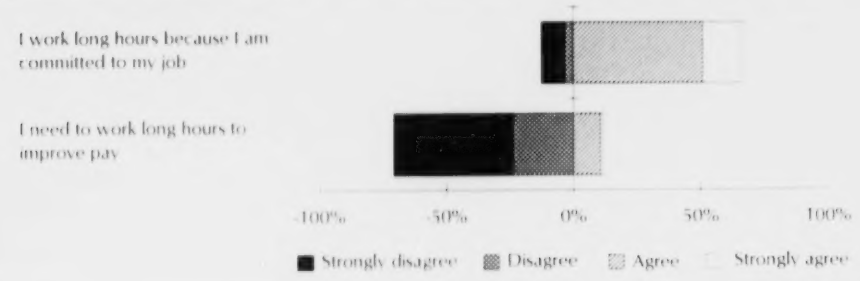
> *'As a senior manager I am expected to work long hours. In some ways this is a disadvantage as it can put people off aspiring to these positions.'*

> *'There is a "culture" within the Civil Service for staff at Grade 7 and above to work more than their contracted hours — it is expected as part of the "public service" ethos.'*

3.3 Commitment to the job

A further reason for working long hours is individual commitment to their job. Over two-thirds of employees responding to our small survey said they worked the long hours because of their commitment (Figure 3:3). We show in Table 3:3 that the more hours the questionnaire respondents worked, the more likely were they to say they worked long hours because of this pride they took in their work. These data suggest that individual commitment to work is a significant reason for working long hours. Many respondents who worked long hours told us that they did it because they wanted to, not because they were pressured by their managers. Similarly, a recent survey undertaken found that three-quarters of employees who worked

Figure 3:3 Employees' views about reasons for working long hours: commitment to the job and to improve pay



Source: IES Survey

more than 48 hours per week did so because they enjoyed work, and one-third admitted that they were workaholics (The Institute of Personnel Development, and Harris, 1998).

Some of the employees we spoke to chose to work long hours because they found work enjoyable. In the media industry, for example, respondents found the work creative and interesting, and the pressure challenging but exciting. We were told that people were highly self motivated and prepared to put in the hours so that they did not miss out on the prestige work. Respondents in other sectors also chose to work long hours because of the rewards it would bring, either to improve their external prospects and to build up a good CV, or they found their work rewarding. For example:

Table 3:3 Employees' views on their commitment to the job, by average number of extra hours worked per week (per cent)

I work long hours because I am committed to my job	Total	Avg. no. extra hours worked per week			
		None	<4	4-7	≥8
Strongly agree/agree	67	39	62	70	82
Neither agree or disagree	16	31	15	26	9
Strongly disagree or disagree	12	31	23	4	9
Mean score	*3.7*	*3.0*	*3.4*	*3.9*	*3.9*
N = all respondents	*161*	*13*	*34*	*46*	*56*

Source: IES Survey

'Overall I do not object to putting in extra effort, as a I feel that my position in the company is high profile and rewarding and my remuneration is very good.'

Another reason for individuals choosing to work long hours was to get better at their work. As one respondent put it: 'if you want to be good at the violin you need to practise'. This was a particular issue for those who were new to their job:

'Currently being new to the company, I feel I need to put in extra time to "get up to speed".'

'I likened the job to that of a junior doctor, working ridiculous hours with the vain hope that one day I would become the senior consultant.'

Some employees were driven by the desire to do the best job for their customers:

'A significant amount of my extra hours are driven by my desire to do the best job I can for our clients.'

'I am conscientious and tenacious in my approach to work and often go the extra mile to satisfy my clients.'

Others admitted that perhaps they were perfectionist or wanted to do the best job they could:

'I appreciate that normally I choose to work these hours. This is personal, and is due to the fact that I like to "finish" things off to a fairly high degree.'

Some of the managers we spoke to felt that there were some employees who preferred to be at work rather than at home. A previous survey found that 60 per cent of managers at times preferred to be at work (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998). The managers we surveyed also felt there were always a few people who needed to work long hours, simply because it took them longer to carry out their work. As one manager put it: 'they are not paid for being there, they are paid to do the job, however long it takes'. Some would rather take 50 hours, if that is the pace at which they work.

3.4 A need to improve pay

Following on from our discussion on individuals choosing to work long hours because of their work interest, pay in some instances was a further reason for this choice. Only around ten

per cent of our respondents to the questionnaire said they needed to work long hours to improve their pay. However, it was an issue where overtime payments were available. For example:

> *'If I was not being paid for the extra hours, I would be very reluctant to do the work.'*

As found in a recent report, overtime is still endemic in many organisations with the main rationale for it being the maintenance of a regular working wage (Hall and Sisson, 1997). This can lead to demarcation, resistance to technological change and poor management. Organisations are now wanting to move away from overtime which they cannot control and is costly, for example by introducing annualised hours. We found in the food processing factories we visited, that prior to the introduction of annualised hours, overtime had been an issue. In one factory, we were told operatives could double their pay by working overtime in summer. In another, individuals had been effectively able to create their own overtime, and work longer hours when they needed to supplement their income. In some cases, operational staff can earn more than their managers because of the amount of overtime which they do. One HR manager in an organisation where overtime was still a problem was concerned that employees were actually defrauding the organisation, claiming that they were working up to 120 hours per week.

Commission payments can also act as an incentive to work longer hours. For example, in sales, employees may work extra hours to increase their bonus. We also noted above that performance related bonuses can have the effect of driving up hours.

3.5 Summary

The main reasons for working long hours were the organisational drivers of workload and long hours cultures, and individual choice or necessity arising out of their commitment to the job or a need to increase pay.

Ninety per cent of the respondents to the small IES survey did not feel that they had enough time to get everything done in their job within normal working hours. These employees felt that they had too much to do and that workloads were increasing. Reasons for these increasing workloads include the need to provide a service to customers, increasing customer expectations, and the provision of greater access to services at

all times of the day. Staff shortages, arising in some cases from delayering and efficiency drives, were also reported to have increased workloads. Although flatter structures do not necessarily lead to greater workloads, some of our respondents felt there was a lack of sufficiently skilled or trained staff to delegate tasks to. The introduction of new technology, facilitating the introduction of 24 hour operations in the manufacturing sector, and e-mail in office based work, can also result in longer working hours for individuals. Project and contract based work, with the need to meet deadlines, can lead to peaks of exceptionally long hours. The need to travel for work is another reason for driving up working hours. Few of our respondents felt that they would be able to reduce their working hours if they were better at managing their time, or if workloads were redistributed. However, there were clearly issues with prioritisation, individual inefficiencies, and work organisation in some of the organisations visited.

Two-thirds of the respondents agreed that a long hours culture existed at their place of work. These cultures were described as where long hours were valued in an organisation or were interpreted as a sign of commitment. Managers' behaviour was seen as one of the main drivers of a culture of long working hours, in particular the example senior managers or line managers set through their own working patterns. The behaviour of colleagues and peer pressure also reinforced such cultures through, for example, comments being made if staff kept to their contracted hours. Job insecurity and individuals feeling the need to prove their indispensability was also noted as an issue by some respondents.

Over two-thirds of the respondents to the IES survey worked long hours because of their commitment to their job. In some cases this was because they enjoyed work and took a personal pride in their work. In others, this commitment arose out of a desire to improve career prospects both internally and externally. Some individuals admitted that they were perfectionists; we also heard of a few examples of individuals who preferred to be at home than at work.

The need to improve pay, in particular where overtime payments were available, is a further reason for long hours. Commission payments and performance related bonuses can also have the effect of driving up working hours.

4 Impact of Long Hours

In this chapter, we turn to consider the impact of working long hours both on individuals and organisations. This discussion is based on our small questionnaire survey, as well as the in-depth interview data. We also draw on some previous research which has attempted to evaluate the impact of working long hours. However, we must reiterate that our sample was not randomly selected and our findings therefore cannot provide firm conclusions on the effect of long hours, but rather some insights into some of the issues. In the first part of the chapter, we look at the impacts upon individuals, in particular upon their personal lives, their health and their work. In the second half, we consider the effect upon organisations, both positive and negative.

4.1 The impact of working long hours on individuals

Most respondents we interviewed felt that continually working long hours on a consistent and ongoing basis was having, or eventually would have, an impact upon their personal lives and their health. Our findings suggest that the combination of work pressure and a lack of control over working hours caused particular problems. Where it was an individual's choice to work long hours, due to their own job interest, hours of work were perceived to present less of a problem, as illustrated by the following quotes:

> *'I recognise that personally I work excess hours . . . but this is my choice, I get a great buzz from my role.'*

> *'I enjoy working the way I do because I am in control of my time — it is my choice.'*

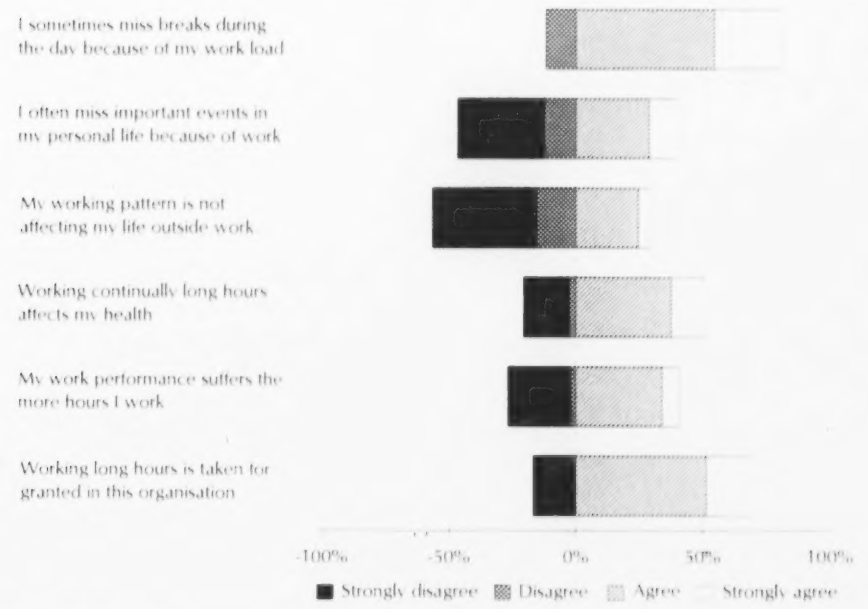
This is a point which has been made in previous research (Sparks, Cooper, Fried and Shirom, 1997; WFD and *Management*

Today, 1998), and one which we return to in the following discussion on the impact of long hours on individuals' personal lives, health and their work.

4.1.1 Personal life

In Figure 4:1, we show the responses from our questionnaire survey to a series of attitude statements relating to the impact of working long hours. We can see that more than half of respondents felt that their working pattern was affecting their life outside work, and over one-third sometimes missed important events in their personal life because of work. However, these data disguise significant differences between respondents at BTS and the rest of the sample. At all other organisations, working hours were having a significantly greater impact on individuals' personal lives, than at BTS — a point we will return to in Chapter 5.

Figure 4:1 Employees' views about the impact of working long hours


I sometimes miss breaks during the day because of my work load
I often miss important events in my personal life because of work
My working pattern is not affecting my life outside work
Working continually long hours affects my health
My work performance suffers the more hours I work
Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation
-100%
-50%
0%
50%
100%
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

Source: IES Survey

Table 4:1 Impact of working long hours on personal lives (per cent)

Employees agreeing or strongly agreeing:	Total	Avg. no. extra hours worked per week		
		<4	4-7	≥8
I sometimes miss breaks during the working day because of my workload	81	71	85	88
I often miss important events in my personal life because of work	42	23	34	50
My working pattern is not affecting my life outside work	30	54	23	22

Source: IES Survey

We show in Table 4:1 that the more extra hours worked, the more likely working long hours were to be affecting individuals' personal lives. The most statistically significant difference according to extra hours worked, was the extent to which respondents agreed with the statement: 'my working pattern is not affecting my life outside work'. More than 80 per cent of those working over 14 additional hours per week felt the hours they worked were having an impact on their personal lives, compared to one-third of those working less than four extra hours. Similarly, individuals were more likely to miss important events in their personal lives, the more hours they worked. As we might expect, the propensity to miss breaks during the day also increased with hours worked.

Our survey also showed that where respondents were of the opinion that a long hours culture existed at their place of work, the more likely were they to feel their working hours were impacting upon their personal life. These perceived impacts also increased with proportion of respondents who said they worked long hours because of their commitment to their work and that long hours were necessary for career progression. These groups of employees are the most likely to be those who work long hours out of choice. However, it appears these employees felt that although it may be their choice to work long hours, these hours were having a detrimental impact on their life outside work. We found no significant differences between the sexes as to the extent to which working long hours were having an impact.

Austin Knight found from their survey of white collar workers that well over half of these employees felt that their personal

lives suffered as a result of their working lives (Austin Knight UK Ltd, 1995). Around one-fifth said their working life had put a relationship at risk, and one-quarter missed important events in their personal lives. Just over half considered they were having difficulty combining a successful career with a good family life. A more recent survey of managers also found that the ability to meet both personal and work commitments was a matter of concern for almost half of respondents (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998), and that this was a particular issue for women. Only four out of ten said the balance was about right between work and their personal life. Well over half agreed that pressure from work left them with less and less time for their personal life. Most of these managers said they had sacrificed something for the sake of career, such as missing their children growing up, putting work before their home or family, missing leisure activities and putting a strain on relationships. In the WFD survey, the amount of autonomy individuals had over their working lives was found to be a significant factor influencing the extent of these types of impacts. However, in both of these surveys no analysis was provided on these impacts, which took into account the number of extra hours worked.

Personal relationships

The impact of long hours on personal relationships was clearly thought to be considerable among the employees we spoke to. There were even a few examples, particularly among managers in retail and the media industry, where individuals felt their working hours had led to the break up of their marriage. In retail, we were told that unless your partner also works in the same sector, it is difficult for them to understand why you cannot leave work on time, and that this leads to a 'stressful home life'. It was also noted in another organisation that working long hours had a detrimental impact on partners, adding to the stress of the job. Here, the HR manager had found that increasing numbers of staff, including male managers, were commenting to this effect. Having to work away from home for extended periods of time was thought to put a particular strain on relationships. The following quote provides another example of long hours affecting a relationship:

> *'Consistently working on Sunday, and long days, is also having a detrimental effect on my personal relationships. Domestic duties now fall to my partner in the main, which is unfair.'*

Families and domestic responsibilities

Research published by the Economic and Social Research Council has drawn attention to the effect working long hours can have upon families (Scase, Scales and Smith, 1998). This study found that 42 per cent of fathers working standard hours talk to their children most days, compared to 20 per cent of fathers working more than 48 hours. In our research, we also heard about how long hours could impact upon individuals' families. Those who worked extra hours felt they did not see their children as much as they would like, and some interviewees talked about the knock-on effects this could have upon society as a whole. Those with childcare responsibilities were thought to be under extra pressure, *ie* pressure from management to work late and anxiety over being home in time to look after the children. Two examples of responses were:

> *'My children are asleep before I go to work and are going to bed when I get home.'*

> *'As a mother I would like to do a full-time job that was only 45 hours per week, but that is considered part time. I can't switch off, I can't go home and forget work.'*

Social lives, leisure and community activities

Other employees talked about the impact their working hours was having upon their social lives and leisure activities. We were told how individuals had had to trade their personal lives for their business lives, in part because they got home too late and also because they were too tired. While some people felt they worked long hours out of choice and therefore this was not considered a problem, others were concerned about the toll their work was taking on their personal lives:

> *'I believe your career shouldn't HAVE to make you compromise your social life . . . . I want to work to live not live to work.'*

> *'This organisation specifically recruits people who are well rounded and have a broader perspective, with outside interests, but then they squeeze out their time and turn them into people who don't have time for things like that.'*

> *I'm finding myself staying up until 12 every night without fail because if I'm going to bed at ten, I just feel I haven't got a social life at all. What is two hours in an evening? You come home from work, you've eaten, you sit down for two hours, and go to bed.*

It's just no good. So I find myself staying up very late [because I need time to unwind] but getting up very tired every single morning and I can't break that cycle at the moment'.

'. . . by the time I get home I find it so hard to unwind . . . I don't get any time for myself at all.'

We did, however, hear about some benefits of some extra hours. For example, one individual felt this enabled him or her to feel more in control:

'I feel that if I spend at least one day a week working until quite late (7/8pm) then I can schedule a lot more urgent tasks within the working day and feel less pressure from other colleagues/ clients. This helps keep my stress levels low, and my home life more enjoyable, as I don't have to worry about work.'

Our research seems to indicate that the extent to which long hours is perceived to have an impact on people's personal lives varies by individual. As one respondent put it: 'some thrive on it and enjoy the recognition they get for it, whereas others resent it'. One factor in this may be the patience and understanding of families and partners, another might be the lifestyle of partners. Another may be their orientation towards work, and the importance they place on outside interests. However, the main factor seems to be the control individuals have over their working hours and their workload and to what extent it is their choice to work long hours.

4.1.2 Health

We show in Figure 4:1 that about half of our small questionnaire survey respondents agreed that working continually long hours affected their health. Similarly, in the Austin Knight research, over half of the sample of white collar workers thought that continually working long hours affected them physically. In our survey, we found no significant difference in the extent to which respondents agreed that working continually long hours affected their health and the number of extra hours worked. However, we did find that significantly more of those who felt that long hours were taken for granted in their place of work, were more likely to perceive a detrimental impact on health. This may indicate that those who felt less in control of their working hours are more likely to perceive an impact of their working lives on their health.

A link has been found between long working hours and mental and physical ill-health, particularly heart complaints (Sparks, Cooper, Fried and Shirom, 1997). Research published by the Economic and Social Research Council has linked working long hours over three years with an almost 20 per cent rise in the proportion of women with health problems (Scase, Scales and Smith, 1998). This study also found that those who work long hours are less likely to take weekly exercise. A number of studies have also shown that the long hours and sleep deprivation suffered by junior doctors is damaging to health and performance, which can result in seriously jeopardising patient care (Dowie, 1989). Cooper's research found that many factors appear to affect the relationship between working time and ill-health. For example, working conditions, the nature of the work, age, diet, life style, responsibilities and personality and the propensity to self report ill-health. The study found that individual reactions to working long hours are 'complex and idiosyncratic'. Therefore, there are difficulties in generalising about the impact of long hours. Choice was found to be a key factor in the effect working long hours can have. The amount of control and autonomy individuals have over their hours of work have been found to influence tolerance of long working hours (Sparks, Cooper, Fried and Shirom, 1997).

HR managers we interviewed felt that the impact working long hours was having upon the health of their staff was less easy to quantify. It was thought that some people were able to get away with consistently working long hours with little ill effect for many years, whereas for others it made them more susceptible to infections. Some felt staff were very resilient at work, but then 'collapsed' when they went on holiday. Many felt there was a high incidence of stress-related illness among staff where they worked. Although noticeable, HR managers found this difficult to directly attribute to long working hours.

The issue of control over working hours was also raised by our interviewees. For example, one employer had found that those who worked the longest hours suffered the least negative effects because of the control they were able to exercise. In contrast, more junior level staff who were under more pressure and had less autonomy suffered more. This employer noted that the amount of sickness leave staff took was increasing, and felt this was attributable to this pressure and lack of control.

Most of the employees we spoke to saw that continually working late resulted in them becoming tired, which in turn led to minor infections or more serious health complaints. Some examples of comments were:

> *'We end up eating dinner at nine, half past nine in the evening . . . and then going straight to bed; and the problems I've had with my stomach, eating just so late at night.'*

> *'Two of my colleagues have been off sick (long term) with stress-related illnesses directly related to the long hours they were forced to do.'*

> *'. . . in the last sort of two, three, four years I've actually had problems with . . . tonsillitis, things like that and that is all I reckon down to work because when I was at college I never ever had that problem. . . . I actually think it is down to doing long hours.'*

4.1.3 Work

We discussed in Chapter 3 the reasons for working long hours, and saw that some individuals chose to work long hours because of their own commitment to their work. Some of these personal reasons may relate to the perceived benefits of working these hours, such as the recognition, job satisfaction or progression in their career that they could gain as a result. Respondents also talked about the advantage of feeling in control of their workload and going home knowing that the job had been done properly, if they put in additional hours.

However, we also heard about some more negative impacts on individuals' working lives. These related to the existence of a long hours culture, in particular. For instance some felt going for career progression was off-putting if this was likely to entail working long hours. Employees we interviewed also felt that working long hours was discriminatory against certain individuals, particularly those with caring responsibilities, who were unable or unwilling to work long hours.

> *'I have a personal view that the long hours culture is discriminatory towards women (especially those with children). If they can't work longer hours because of family responsibilities then their career options are limited — evidenced by the few women at the senior end of this organisation.'*

One HR manager felt that those who did not work long hours were those that had written off their promotion prospects. In one organisation, we were told that not working long hours could lead to a feeling of guilt, and that employees felt they needed to apologise if they were leaving work on time. In another, there was a perception that staff were burnt out by the time they were 40 and needed to move to a 'quieter life'. This seemed to be confirmed by the fact that there were only a small percentage of staff over 50. Here, it was also widely acknowledged that employees needed to be single or childless to reach senior management positions.

4.2 The impact of long hours on organisations

Working long hours was perceived to have both positive and negative impacts on organisations. In the short term, working long hours was seen as a way of making organisations competitive and getting the maximum benefit out of limited resources. The pressure was thought to be good for business. Long hours helped to ensure deadlines were met, which maintained credibility with clients. Some employees we spoke to thought that if they did not put in the hours, their work would suffer. However, in the longer term most of the HR managers questioned whether these effects were sustainable. They identified a number of negative impacts of working long hours on their organisation as a whole. These were:

- diminishing returns to productivity
- poorer quality service or products
- increased sickness absence
- poor staff morale
- higher staff turnover
- recruitment difficulties, and
- risks to health and safety.

4.2.1 Productivity and quality

We show in Table 4:2 that approximately forty per cent of respondents to our small survey, agreed that their work performance suffered the more hours they worked. In Table 4:2 we show that this proportion increases slightly, but not significantly, by number of extra hours worked.

Table 4:2 Impact of working long hours on their work (per cent)

Employees agreeing or strongly agreeing:	Total	Avg. no. extra hours worked per week		
		<4	4-7	≥8
My work performance suffers the more hours I work	41	34	36	42
Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation	69	57	70	72

Source: IES Survey

Austin Knight's survey of white collar workers also found that around half of their white collar respondents felt work performance suffered. One HR manager we interviewed commented on the fact that part-time workers were more productive than full-timers, noting that nobody can work flat out for extended periods of time. Thus, productivity was thought to diminish the longer the hours worked. Many individuals we interviewed commented that they were unable to perform well or provide a high quality service if they were tired as a result of working long hours. HR managers noted that they had seen examples of people being tired, struggling to make decisions and wasting time when they were working excessive hours. This led in turn to poorer quality work and making mistakes. Irritability and short temperedness at work was also thought to be an impact of working excessive hours:

> *'People can pick up if you're in a major strop or if you're really tired. . . . and I think it does relate to your performance because you have to sell yourself first, and when you sell yourself, the sales will come after . . . so you have to always look and you have to always act as if you know what you're saying and you know what you're doing, whereas if I'm not having enough hours sleep, I can't remember what I'm saying and what I'm doing, and it does affect your performance at the end of the day.'*
>
> *'I haven't really had the holiday this year so far. It's got to the stage now where I'm making mistakes that I wouldn't normally do and it's just too much at both ends. . . . I need a break.'*

However, one group of employees felt their employer failed to recognise that there may be a connection between better quality of life and the quality of their work.

Long hours are also a problem for organisations if it means that the right people are not working at the right time (as shown in

the Asda case study). In organisations where excessive overtime had been a problem in the past, such as at MD Foods, long hours had been found to be costly and inefficient. This overtime also led to difficulties with planning and organising resourcing.

4.2.2 Sickness absence

We have discussed above the possible impacts of working long hours on health. Clearly there are difficulties attributing sickness absence to long hours. However, a number of the employers visited noted that this absence was increasing along with hours. One employer in particular had identified that 19 per cent of sick leave in the organisation was stress related.

4.2.3 Staff morale

HR managers also felt that persistent long hours may have an impact upon staff morale. Although a direct link could not be proved, it was thought that staff could feel demoralised and taken for granted as a result. As shown in Figure 4:1, approximately two-thirds of our respondents felt that working long hours was taken for granted in their organisation. In Table 4:2 we show that the more hours worked, the more likely were respondents to feel that long hours were taken for granted. One HR manager reported that they were having to take the issue of long hours seriously, as it was a 'hot topic' and staff were starting to complain. Another impact on employee morale noted in one organisation was a system of overtime which was thought to be divisive. Here, operational staff could earn more than managers.

4.2.4 Staff turnover and recruitment difficulties

High staff turnover and recruitment difficulties were also thought to be attributable to long hours in some organisations. The WFD survey of managers also found that 40 per cent of managers thought that work pressure was a cause of staff turnover (WFD and *Management Today*, 1998).

In our research, we heard about examples of departments or organisations known to have a long hours culture, which were reported to experience particular recruitment difficulties. Employers were also concerned about the detrimental impact that a long hours culture could have on their image as a caring or

equal opportunities employer. They also felt that if long hours were seen as the expected norm within the workplace, this would reduce their ability to recruit people who took their outside responsibilities seriously.

4.2.5 Health and safety

The idea that long hours has an impact upon health and safety lies behind the Working Time Directive. It has been noted that long distance drivers working long hours may be endangering the public. Similarly, overworked junior doctors may put their patients at risk (Sparks, Cooper, Fried and Shirom, 1997). A group of drivers we spoke to reported that they could work six days of ten hours per day for two or three weeks consecutively, and raised a concern about the safety and legality of this. One organisation was concerned to an extent that it would leave itself very open if the risks to health and safety of long working hours were proven.

4.3 Wider impacts

It goes beyond the scope of our study to consider the impact of long working hours on society or the national economy as a whole. However, as noted in a feature on the BBC *Money Programme* in 1997, the diminishing returns on productivity within organisations are likely to impact upon the efficiency of the economy in the long run. If long hours lead to ill health, in the long run this will put a further strain on the health service. If the pressure long hours puts on relationships and families leads to family breakdown, this will ultimately affect society as a whole as the 'social glue' is taken away.

4.4 Summary

Long working hours were perceived by our respondents to have a negative impact upon individuals, the organisations they worked for, and ultimately upon the national economy and society as a whole.

Previous studies have found that the extent to which long hours cause a problem for individuals can be influenced by the amount of control they have over their hours and whether it is their choice to work such hours (Sparks, Cooper, Fried and

Shirom, 1997). Over 40 per cent of the respondents to the small IES survey often missed important events in their personal lives as a result of their working pattern. This proportion rose the more hours which were worked, and the more committed individuals were to their work. This indicates that even though individuals may choose to work long hours, they still recognise that their work pattern can have an impact upon their personal life. Long working hours were reported to have had detrimental impacts on personal relationships, and in extreme cases had contributed to marriage breakdowns, time spent with families and children, and time available for social, leisure and community activities.

Survey respondents felt that it was more difficult to directly attribute long working hours to ill-health. Previous research has found that the impact upon health depends upon a number of factors including the nature of work, age, diet, lifestyle, attitude, responsibilities and the propensity to self report ill-health (Sparks, Cooper, Fried and Shirom, 1997). Half agreed that continually working long hours affected their health. Some of the HR managers felt there was a link between increased rates of sickness absence and long working hours. The health impacts reported ranged from minor infections to more serious health complaints, resulting in the need to take long term sick leave.

Long working hours also has an impact on individuals' work and career prospects. For instance, some participants in the research felt going for career progression was off-putting if this entailed long hours. Employees also felt that working long hours was discriminatory against certain individuals, particularly those with caring responsibilities, who were unable or unwilling to work long hours.

Working long hours was perceived to have both positive and negative impacts on organisations. In the short term it was thought that if people did not put in the hours, their work would suffer. Working long hours was seen as a way of getting the maximum benefit out of limited resources. However, in the longer term, most respondents felt that these effects were not sustainable. Quality of work and productivity were thought to diminish the longer the hours worked.

HR managers felt that there was a link between increased sickness absence, high staff turnover and recruitment difficulties, and long hours. Departments or organisations known to have a

long hours culture were reported to experience particular recruitment difficulties. Employers were also concerned about the detrimental impact a long hours culture could have on their image as a caring or equal opportunities employer. The impact on staff morale was also noted and many of the employee respondents felt that long working hours were taken for granted in their organisation. HR managers reported that they were having to take the issue of long hours seriously, as it was a 'hot topic' and staff were starting to complain. Long hours were also thought to lead to greater health and safety risks.

5 Measures to Reduce Long Working Hours

In this chapter we consider measures to reduce long working hours. Firstly, we discuss the measures introduced by Government through the Working Time Directive (WTD). We look at the potential costs and benefits for employers of the implementation of measures to comply with the legislation, and the possible impact of the regulations and the benefits for individuals.

We then turn to steps taken by employers to reduce working hours. As we noted in Chapter 1, we have been able to find relatively few examples where employers have successfully tackled a long hours culture. However, we have found that employers are concerned about the issue. Drawing from our case studies of employers which have started to address long hours, we discuss the reasons why employers have introduced such measures, the types of interventions introduced, and how they were implemented. We also provide an initial evaluation of the impact of such measures.

5.1 The Working Time Directive

The WTD (see Appendix 1), for the first time in the UK, provides general regulations regarding working time. The law is designed to protect employees' health and safety from over-work. It is employers' responsibility to ensure that all reasonable steps to ensure that the regulations, including the maximum 48 hour working week, are complied with. The Directive is viewed by government as forming an important part of their aim to create a flexible labour market underpinned by minimum standards. It is seen as providing employees with basic minimum rights through a legal framework, while allowing those who choose to

work outside this framework, the possibility to do so (DTI, 1998).

5.1.1 Benefits of the WTD for employers

As outlined by the Department of Trade and Industry, the WTD aims to contribute to better relationships in the workplace, and to improve morale and performance, which should enhance productivity. It will also discourage competition which relies on poor working conditions, which can amount to exploitation (DTI, 1998). The Directive has been described in a recent report as being a 'blessing in disguise', if it encourages employers to take management of time and the problem of long hours in the UK more seriously (Hall and Sisson, 1997).

Among some of the HR managers we interviewed for our research, the WTD was seen as providing an impetus to address the issue of long working hours which had already been causing concern. For example, at Birds Eye Wall's, as a 'caring employer', the organisation was concerned about the impact of working long hours. The WTD acted as a further impetus for addressing the problem. The two examples provided here show further instances of employers welcoming the WTD.

Example 1

Working hours have been high on the agenda in this organisation for the last 18 months. The organisation has been concerned about the work patterns of some of its staff. They feel these hours are on the whole not sensible or sustainable. The principle of the WTD has given further impetus for the whole organisation to address the problem.

Example 2

Operational workers in this organisation are low paid and supplement their basic salary with overtime pay. Some employees work double or treble shifts. The employer is hindered by the union who are not in favour of the employer recruiting part-time workers to cover additional shifts. Hiring extra workers will also increase overheads. Hence, a culture of long hours working is prevalent within the organisation. As employees and the union are resistant to change, in particular to any efforts to introduce

automated systems which would reduce demand for labour, the employer is inhibited and finds it increasingly difficult to deal with the issue of staff working long hours through overtime. In terms of operational staff working long hours, the EC WTD will be used as an opportunity to make inroads into the inherent resistance to organisational change within the company. The Directive is considered to be a positive opportunity for some within the company, while others fear the resulting conflict with the union.

5.1.2 Employers' concerns about the WTD

A number of concerns about the WTD have been raised by employers. These are in relation to implementing the necessary measures to ensure they comply with the new law, and some confusion over the coverage and exclusions of the regulations (Brunker, 1998; Whitely, 1998; Thatcher, 1998). The concerns which have been raised include:

- **The exemption of those whose work is not measured** or predetermined, or can be determined by the worker himself or herself, and where the line is drawn as to the employees this includes, ie only directors and managing executives or also senior managers.
- **The definition of working time**: whether this includes travel required for work, staying overnight in hotels and entertaining clients.
- **The implementation of systems to record working hours** of employees working more than 48 hours per week, and the cost and time implications for employers to do this.
- **Checking hours of employees working away from the office or place of work.**
- **Agency temporary staff**: some agencies are concerned that the cost of calculating hours worked will need to be passed on to their clients.
- **Employees working for more than one employer**, for example whether an employer would be in breach of the regulations if an employee worked 30 hours per week for one employer and an additional 30 hours for another employer.
- **Holiday entitlements** and whether these include bank holidays.

A report by the Institute of Directors has highlighted concerns among employers in relation to the implementation of the WTD (Lea and Howard, 1997). It warned that when the WTD was

implemented and the government joined the Social Chapter, business and job creation would be harmed. More than half of the respondents to a survey of 700 company directors felt their overall business would be damaged by the working hours ruling, whereas three per cent said they would benefit. Three-quarters of the sample said they would seek an opt-out on the WTD legislation on the grounds that the nature of their business made compliance impractical. Two-thirds cited the need to perform urgent or unforeseen work as the reason. Continuity of production and continuous coverage for security and surveillance purposes were also cited.

The concern for the organisations we visited for the purposes of this research related to their reputation as responsible employers. It was clearly important that they should avoid any litigation in relation to the WTD and were therefore taking a cautious approach in their interpretation of the law.

5.1.3 The cost of implementing measures to comply with the WTD

The Department of Trade and Industry has conducted an analysis of the likely costs of implementing measures to comply with the WTD. They have estimated that on top of the total labour bill of £419 billion in the UK in 1997, the cost of complying with the legislation will be an additional £1.9 billion. This represents less than 0.5 per cent of the annual labour bill. This estimate only takes into account immediate costs of implementing measures to comply with the regulations. It does not include longer term costs, or benefits, if productivity is to increase. They take into account the cost of introducing systems to record working hours, implementing the daily and weekly rest periods and holiday entitlements to those employees not already entitled, and the health assessments for night workers. Agriculture, mining, hotels and restaurants are the industrial sectors which have been calculated to be most affected. However, the cost to individual businesses will clearly vary depending upon the adjustments which they will need to make (DTI, 1998).

5.1.4 Benefits of the WTD for individuals

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, 1998) outlines the benefits of the WTD as:

- **Promotion of individual choice**: employees now have the right to work no more than 48 hours per week unless they choose to do so.
- **A better balance between work and family life** through the 48 working week limit (a high proportion of males working more than 48 hours are fathers), and also the guaranteed holiday will mean that employees will be able to spend more time with their families.
- **Improvements in health and safety**: the reductions in fatigue caused by excess hours is thought to provide many benefits, including less call on health services, and better performance at work, and fewer accidents.

The Department of Trade and Industry has also estimated the number of workers who stand to benefit from the introduction of the WTD (DTI, 1998). The minimum paid leave requirement would increase paid leave for around 2.5 million employees, and a further 0.6 million when the four weeks holiday entitlement is introduced in November, 1999. Daily and weekly rest entitlements stand to benefit two million employees. The benefit of the 48 hour limit is more difficult to calculate. Based on Spring 1997 LFS data, 2.7 million employees who worked more than 48 hours per week stand to benefit from this. However, the 1996 *British Social Attitude Survey* indicates that less than ten per cent of employees working over 48 hours per week would prefer to work fewer hours than they currently do, if it meant a reduction in their weekly pay (DTI, 1998). The WTD states that staff cannot be subject to a detriment for failing to agree to opt out of the 48 hour limit. It is unclear whether cutting pay amounts to such a detriment, especially when an employee is paid by the hour (Brunker, 1998).

5.1.5 Enforcement of the WTD

The Health and Safety Executive, and local authorities, will be responsible for enforcing working time and night work limits. The enforcement of the WTD entitlements for paid annual leave and rest breaks will be through complaint via industrial tribunal and sanctions imposed by health and safety at work authorities. It appears that enforcement will be based upon case law and it is expected that many employers may not change their practices until they are challenged.

The legislation will provide some protection for employees from working excessive hours and clarifies what is reasonable for employers to expect. It may also have the effect of changing cultures and attitudes towards long working hours, by raising the issue. However, some concern has been raised about its likely impact:

> *'Although the European Commission's Working Time Directive attempts to address these personal, family and social problems, its impact is likely to be very limited — not least because in many circumstances, it is possible for employers and employees to make special agreements on longer working hours. Government, trade unions and the business community need to address these issues much more seriously themselves, particularly the specific problems confronted by women.'* (Scase, Scales and Smith, 1998).

5.2 Employers' interventions

We have noted above that the WTD has provided an impetus for employers to address working long hours. However, some of the employers we visited had further concerns about long hours and the WTD was not the only reason for tackling the issue. We now turn to outline some of the reasons for employers wanting to tackle long hours.

5.2.1 Drivers for addressing long hours

We have identified four main drivers for addressing long hours.

- **To provide a service to customers**: To remain competitive, employers are introducing extended services to customers, to such as longer trading hours in retail (see Asda case study) and 24 hour operations in production (MD Foods and Birds Eye Wall's), and 24 hour banking. In order to meet customer expectations, employers are looking at ways to fit staffing levels with demand and open up work options. The intensification of competition in the private sector means that management needs to look at ways to increase efficiency and reduce costs. In particular, our case studies of Asda and MD Foods show the need to ensure that the right people are working the necessary hours.
- **New technology** is also creating opportunities to develop products and services and thus involve different patterns of working time (Hall and Sisson, 1997).

- **Concerns about staff morale, sickness and turnover.** In our interviews with HR managers, we were repeatedly told that long hours and workload were issues which had come up in their staff opinion surveys, and appeared to be affecting morale. At Asda, the impact of long working hours upon sickness absence and staff turnover was also noted. BTS wanted to ensure high staff motivation, and perceived that a long hours culture could work against this.
- **To promote a family friendly working environment**: as we show in the case study, BTS wanted to promote a more equal working environment. They recognised that a long hours culture:
  - supported an unequal environment, especially where members of the workforce have outside responsibilities and are unable to commit to working long hours
  - presented a barrier to the development of the female workforce in particular, and
  - failed to promote the group value of helping colleagues to fulfil family and other responsibilities.

5.2.2 Identification of measures to take

In terms of identifying how to go about tackling long working hours, we show in our case studies that many of these employers have used working groups to look at the reasons for working long hours and come up with solutions for how hours might be reduced. Asda, for example, undertook a consultation process with staff and ran workshops. The solutions identified came from the staff themselves. BTS have also held staff workshops facilitated by external consultants to discuss long hours problems. A working party has been set up to look at the long hours culture within the organisation and the promotion of family friendly policies. At BTS, this working party works closely with BTS People Management Executive Steering Committee. BTS also makes extensive use of graduate trainees to generate fresh ideas. MD Foods had an annualised hours working group, but also looked at other systems in place in other companies. This working group was involved both with the technical side of devising the system, as well as negotiating the new agreement with the union.

We provide a further example of staff working groups being used to identify measures to ensure an employer complied with the WTD in Example 3 below.

Example 3

The approach taken to identifying solutions reflected the fact that the employer anticipated there would be a number of issues arising from the WTD. They therefore dedicated staff resources to the task of defining the problems, finding solutions if possible, and identifying areas where the derogations would need to be sought. A small working group was formed to address the potential impact of the WTD. The working group set out to understand the implications of the Directive, translating it into more user-friendly language, negotiating with the trade union and lawyers, and identifying problem areas.

5.3 Changing work patterns

As noted above, we came across relatively few examples of employers which had successfully implemented measures to tackle long working hours. However, the measures that were being introduced broadly fell into two types: those that were changing work patterns and those that were addressing individual behaviour. We first outline the types of measures which had been implemented to change work patterns.

5.3.1 Annualised hours

The MD Foods and Birds Eye Wall's case studies provide examples of annualised hours being introduced in the manufacturing sector, in order to fit with 24 hour operations and to reduce overtime. We show that at MD Foods, roster patterns are prepared based on market data to ensure the right people are working when they are needed, and to cut overtime. Annualised hours are also being introduced in the service sector, for example for front office branch staff in banks, and maintenance staff in local government. This is in order to tailor working time to match peaks and troughs in demand. The Institute of Management has estimated that 17 per cent of all UK firms now have annualised hours, compared with 13 per cent two years ago. It has been estimated that this covers five per cent of the UK workforce (Atkinson, 1998).

5.3.2 Rotas and shift patterns

Our Asda case study provides an example of the introduction of rotas and shift patterns to enable store managers to reduce their working hours, but to ensure that there is cover at peak times of the week. This has been supported by the introduction of systems to record hours, management restructuring, and training programmes.

5.3.3 Flexible working arrangements

The BTS case study provides examples of a variety of flexible working patterns which have been introduced, in particular the availability of combinations of part-time hours which can fit in with school hours, flexitime and working from home. Flexitime has been operating in many organisations for some time. However, such systems can be quite rigid, core hours are not necessarily the most appropriate hours to be worked, and they often do not allow for working from home. Some organisations are looking at ways to make the systems more flexible by revising core hours, allowing for more hours to be carried over between reference periods, working outside traditional hours, and counting hours worked at home (Local Government Management Board, 1998).

5.3.4 Changing working practices

Employers are also looking at their working practices to improve efficiencies and reduce the need to work long hours. BTS, for example, have introduced a new business process whereby people are being given clearer defined roles and the number of working days needed for projects are identified. Asda is implementing a staff scheduling system to ensure appropriate staff and numbers of staff are available. The following example illustrates how new working practices are being used to avoid the necessity to work extra hours.

Example 4

The organisation, in the public administration sector, aims to increase efficiency by five to six per cent each year. Within the organisation team working is encouraged. Each team or branch has a 'Can Do' chart. This sets out a list of what each individual can do. Some employees are known as 'black belts' and are able

to do most tasks. Others are brown belts or yellow belts *etc.* Essentially, each branch are encouraged to show what their capabilities are. It is important for teams to ensure that all activities or tasks are well covered, and are not solely reliant on a single individual. Hence, spreading knowledge among employees is encouraged.

Where an employee has a problem (eg dealing with workload) she or he is encouraged to communicate it to the team. The responsibility of getting a job done should not be left to one person, but is considered to be the responsibility of the team. In addition, employees are able to contact the chief executive if they have a problem which they need resolving.

Paid overtime is available for most staff except branch heads. If staff are seeking overtime because of their workload, agreement has to come from the director. Hence the director would be aware if a problem resulting from workload had arisen. If problems arise because of excessive workloads, staff are expected to call for assistance from other branches. Staff are encouraged to reveal any difficulties they are having. This employer feels that it is unlikely that a problem should go unnoticed, given the channels of communication available (flash meetings and wider meetings).

5.3.5 Measuring working time

In order to ensure compliance with the WTD and to monitor working hours among staff, and reasons for working long hours, employers are introducing computerised recording systems. Store managers at Asda now record their hours through a swipe card system.

5.3.6 Employment of staff

Clearly, employing more staff will reduce the need to work long hours, although this is an option employers would want to avoid in the context of a drive for greater efficiency. A measure which has been introduced by an insurance company, however, is to employ additional part-time staff to help cover longer shift working patterns (Industrial Society, 1995).

5.4 Changing individual behaviour and company culture

We now detail some of the steps taken by the case study organisations to change individual behaviour and company culture.

5.4.1 Raising awareness of the issue

Many of the employers were attempting to raise awareness of the issue of working hours among managers and staff. The purpose of this was described as encouraging individuals to feel able to discuss any problems with workload and working hours with their manager, so that problems could be addressed as they arose. BTS, for example, sees publicity and communication as vital tools to change workplace culture. They believe that cultural change can only succeed if the organisation is receptive to it. Widespread publicity for their initiatives is used to raise awareness and maintain momentum.

A number of the employers were raising awareness about the issue of long hours through e-mail, and staff magazines and newsletters. This was to give the message that it was an issue managers were concerned about and were looking at. Running workshops and seminars was another method to raise awareness and identify solutions to long working hours, which we discussed in Section 5.3. We provide a further example of this below.

Example 5

Lobbying staff to encourage them to comply with the WTD and raising awareness of the impact of working long hours: This organisation has run a series of workshops and seminars to address issues and discuss alternatives. It was felt important to keep these interventions flexible to fit in with various sub-cultures. Events have included workshops, board meetings, team briefings and videos. They are targeted at senior people to encourage them to acknowledge the problem and think of positive ways that working practices can be changed, while retaining job satisfaction and remaining competitive.

5.4.2 Training and development programmes

Training and development programmes which aimed to change individual behaviour were being implemented in a number of the organisations. We outline in the case study the personal

development programme being implemented at BTS. This is a programme which focuses on work life balance and personal effectiveness. BTS have recognised that in order to make the flexible working policies they have in place effective, individuals need to adapt and work within this flexible environment. The personal development programme is thus seen as an important element of their attempt to change the organisational culture.

Time management training was also being used to attempt to encourage staff to work more effectively. In another organisation, staff training did not solely focus on how to do the job but also on how to organise work. One public sector organisation had provided guidance on managing meetings and managing time.

5.4.3 Managers setting an example by reducing their working hours

We heard of examples in particular departments within organisations, of managers encouraging staff to work 'more sensible' hours, by reducing their own hours and setting an example. This is intended to change a long hours culture and get over the problem of staff not feeling they can go home before their managers do so, which we outlined in Chapter 3. The following quote provides an example of this.

> *'When we started normal operating and were operating at a steady pace, management started to go home earlier and said to staff it was okay to go home at the normal time. This change has come from the top down. Management has led by example and fewer hours are worked. However, long hours are worked when there are specific jobs to be done or deadlines to meet.'*

5.4.4 Go home on time days

One-off events such as 'go home on time days' have been found to be successful at BTS, in particular. This was initially a national event launched by Parents at Work, whereby on one day staff were encouraged to work their 'normal' hours. BTS have held a number of these days, but have recognised that while they may raise awareness about working hours they do not necessarily tackle the underlying problems which lie behind long hours.

5.5 Impact of interventions

For most of these initiatives we have discussed, it is clearly too early to evaluate the impact they have had. However, our discussions with employees can provide some early indications of their success.

Our respondents at BTS were generally positive about the steps the organisation had taken to change the culture. As we showed in Chapter 2, a lower proportion of employees at BTS worked long hours as compared with all the other case study employers. However, because our sample was not randomly drawn, it is difficult for us to conclude that this necessarily had anything to do with the initiatives being implemented.

We show in Table 5:1 the differences between the responses from BTS staff and all other respondents to a number of attitude statements relating to long hours. We can see that BTS staff were less likely to feel that long hours were part of the culture where they worked. They also felt this organisation gave them the chance to balance work and life outside better than other organisations, and were less likely to miss important events in

Table 5:1 Views about working long hours

Erespondents agreeing/strongly agreeing:	BTS		All others	
	%	Mean score	%	Mean score
Working long hours is part of the culture of where I work	65	3.6	80	4.0
Working long hours is taken for granted in this organisation	64	3.6	71	4.0
I often miss important events in my personal life because of work	27	2.6	68	3.6
My working pattern is not affecting my life outside work	41	2.9	11	2.1
This organisation gives me the chance to balance work and life outside better than other organisations	44	3.4	17	2.6
N = whole sample (multiple responses allowed)	*103*		*58*	

Note: the nearer the mean score to five, the higher the rating. Three is a mid-scale score.

Source: IES Survey

their personal lives because of work. There are again difficulties for us to conclude that these differences were due to the initiatives and the development programme which were being implemented, as we have not conducted a 'before and after' analysis. However, nearly one-third of the BTS respondents to our questionnaire survey reported unprompted that management was trying to do something to reduce working hours, which does indicate that staff had perceived changes within the organisation. For example:

> *'This organisation is getting far better and more focused on long hours issues and is making the effort to have a more balanced lifestyle within its staff.'*

> *'BTS have attempted to improve things with the Renaissance Programme which is well received. I no longer work at home and have become much more aware of how working so hard is affecting my surrounding colleagues.'*

Where annualised hours had been introduced, for example at MD Foods, there was a clear response from our survey participants that hours had been reduced. In the other case study organisations, there was also generally an understanding that long hours had been acknowledged as an issue. In some cases, however, the view was that management had made a start, but there was still some way to go.

5.6 Implementation of measures to reduce long working hours

The case studies in the second part of this report detail the manner in which the various initiatives described above have been implemented. We now consider some of the barriers and difficulties employers have encountered when implementing these various interventions. We then identify some of the key factors which appear to contribute to successful interventions.

5.6.1 Problems and limitations of the interventions

Workload

We found examples where although staff felt the intention was there within the organisation to change a long hours culture, there were clearly difficulties involved. The main problem

identified was that workload could override the management aim of allowing staff to balance work and home life. In some cases, it was also thought that staff shortages and staff turnover made the culture difficult to change. At Asda, for example, a lack of trained supervisors for managers to delegate to, was an issue for some of our respondents. The following quotes illustrate some of the issues:

> *'I feel that the senior management where I work are very committed to the concept that working long hours should be discouraged, in theory. I think in reality it's very hard to put this into practice.'*

> *'The nature of the job means you have to be flexible and respond as events happen, even when you are about to leave for the day.'*

> *'In recent years, the organisation has initiated courses about balancing home life and working life — a very good idea. But this does not really impact the way the workload has changed, as there appears to be more work for fewer people.'*

Some of the managers interviewed had a further concern. They felt there was a fine line between encouraging staff to go home on time, but at the same time encouraging them to deliver exceptional performance. There were perceived to be difficulties in not rewarding or praising those who put in the extra hours to deliver this level of performance. However, there is a danger that this will lead to staff perceiving that long working hours are valued, and thus reinforce a long hours culture.

Resistance to change

Resistance to change among staff and managers can clearly present a barrier to tackling a long hours culture. Working hours are a very personal thing, and a new working pattern can be difficult to get used to. This was especially the case where employees were used to having more control over the hours they work, and more rigid systems were being introduced. This was a particular issue among some staff in our case study organisations, where annualised hours or new shift patterns had been introduced. For example, some staff at MD Foods found the increase in time off work difficult to cope with. Respondents in some other organisations found new working patterns involved working more unsociable hours. There can be difficulties in identifying suitable shift patterns to suit the

circumstances of all employees. Some of our respondents perceived the new working patterns not to be family friendly, although they were intended to be so.

Management not leading by example

Interviewees repeatedly commented that there were difficulties in tackling a long hours culture if managers did not lead by example and reduce their own working hours:

> *'If the executive don't practise normal working hours then the rest of the organisation won't follow.'*

> *'While the company stresses that we should not be working long hours, there's still an underlying message that it is expected of you.'*

Individuals felt they had to be very assertive and strong willed to reduce their own hours without this clear support from their line managers. Without managers setting an example in this way, our findings suggest that staff are more likely to perceive any attempt to tackle the long hours culture as 'window dressing'. They may feel that managers are not seriously committed to change. We outline below that one of the key aspects of successful interventions is commitment from the very top of the organisation. However, one of the difficulties identified with this is how managers lower down the organisation might get this commitment if it is not already there.

Other difficulties or barriers we identified related to teething problems with new systems, such as computerised systems to record hours, which were being introduced.

5.6.2 Key aspects of successful interventions

From our research findings we have drawn out a number of elements of successful interventions.

- **Early consultation with staff and managers** and identification of the problems, concerns and root causes of working long hours through, for example, staff surveys or staff working groups (eg Asda, MD Foods and BTS). This may involve lengthy negotiation with unions (eg Birds Eye Walls).
- **Solutions guided by the analysis of the problems** and the identified causes of long working hours. An attempt to address

long working hours may uncover deeper problems, such as institutionalised overtime, which need to be addressed.

- **Stand back and 'think outside the box'** to identify new approaches to today's problems.
- **Implementation**:
  - **commitment and a sponsorship for change from the very top**, with a genuine belief among top managers that working long hours is not efficient in the long term (*eg* Asda and BTS). This has been noted as essential in a previous report:

    'Critically, the commitment needs to start at the very top. Senior managers are not going to get the level of commitment they are asking from other employees unless they first change themselves. At the most basic level, it may mean altering their own patterns of working time — in many organisations the equation of long hours with performance depends, above all, on senior managers who do not seem to have a home to go to.' (Hall and Sisson, 1997 p.59)

  - **a change agent** with influence to champion the initiative and gain support of key people within the organisation (*eg* BTS)
  - **bring the key people on board** such as senior management and unions. BTS cascaded the development programme down from the top in order to build up a ground swell and get buy-in. MD Foods carefully negotiated the agreements with the unions.
  - **communication and publicity** to raise awareness about the issues and the solutions being implemented through, for example, e-mail, staff magazines, videos and line managers, to provide a clear message that there is a commitment to addressing the issues (*eg* Asda, BTS, MD Foods and Birds Eye Wall's). A simple concept or catch phase can help to raise the profile of the initiative, and bring about cultural change. A public statement from the top is also important.
  - **support and counselling** to staff, to help with changes and address people's fear on an individual basis (*eg* Birds Eye Wall's)
  - **leading by example**: line managers need to change their own behaviour in order to change the culture of working long hours among their staff
  - **a range of initiatives** which support and reinforce each other, and tackle the underlying issues rather than a single narrow approach

    - **effective time management** inserted into competence frameworks was a measure suggested, as 'what gets measured gets done'
    - **reinforce messages and maintain momentum**: not a quick win or one-off event, but solutions to achieve permanent change.
- **Ongoing monitoring and feedback**: for example, recording of hours worked and discussions with line managers to identify the reasons for working long hours; and possible solutions to the problem and feedback from employees on the impact of the intervention leading to the identification of further measures (*eg* Asda).
- Evaluation through, for example, identification of success criteria, and evaluation of positive and negative impacts of the intervention.

5.7 Summary and conclusions

The EU Working Time Directive is focusing employers' attention on the issue of long working hours. Some employers welcome the impetus this is providing to address problems such as institutionalised overtime, about which they were already concerned. Others are concerned about the cost of complying with the regulations and the interpretation of the legislation. However, the WTD is not the only reason for employers implementing initiatives to tackle the long working hours. Many of the HR managers we interviewed recognised that although it may be efficient to work long hours in the short term, it was neither efficient or sustainable to do so in the longer term. The fundamental business issue is not how best to circumvent the Directive; rather, it is to understand the causes of long hours, note their consequences, and devise policies to ameliorate them.

There are few examples of instances where employers have been able to successfully tackle long working hours and long hours cultures. However, drawing on the few examples identified in the course of this research, it appears that interventions fall into two main types — those aimed at:

- changing work patterns, such as:
    - annualised hours
    - revised scheduling and rota schemes
    - flexible working arrangements and job redesign

- changing individual behaviour and company culture:
  - training and development programmes to improve time management and delegation
  - visibly changed top management behaviour and commitment
  - 'go home on time' days to raise awareness of the issue.
  - Within the organisations visited, it was too early to evaluate the impact of the interventions introduced. However, HR managers perceived that there had been impacts such as improved morale, reduced staff turnover, greater efficiency and flexibility.

Table 5:2 summarises key elements of successful interventions.

Table 5:2 The 'do's and don'ts' of measures to reduce working hours

	Do	Don't
Solution generation	Identify the reasons for working long hours: the problems, root causes and concerns about working hours through, for example, staff surveys or staff working groups to look at the issue.	Introduce solutions without having looked at the root causes of the problems.
	Generate solutions which are guided by this analysis of the problems and the identified reasons for working long hours.	
	'Think outside the box' to identify new approaches to today's problems.	
Implementation	Ensure there is commitment and a sponsorship for change from the very top of the organisation, with a genuine belief that working long hours is not efficient in the long term.	Encourage employees to work fewer hours, but continue to expect work to be completed within unrealistic time scales.
	Communicate to staff the measures being implemented and raise awareness about the issue of working hours. A public statement from the very top will help to provide a clear message that there is a genuine commitment to addressing the issues.	Allow staff to perceive that management is only paying lip service to the issue.

(cont.)

	Do	Don't
	Use a simple catchphrase to raise the profile of the initiative.	
	Lead by example. Line managers need to change their own behaviour in order to change the culture of working long hours among staff.	Allow managers to tell their staff to work fewer hours but continue to work long hours themselves.
	Bring the people on board such as senior managers and stakeholders such as unions.	
	Reinforce messages and maintain momentum with the implementation of measures on an ongoing basis.	Expect a quick fix or a one-off event to result in permanent change.
	Implement a range of initiatives which support each other and together tackle the underlying issues.	Take a single narrow approach which does not tackle the root causes of the problem.
Monitoring and evaluation	Monitor hours worked through, for example, keeping records of hours worked and line managers identifying the reasons for individuals working long hours and discussing these with staff.	
	Implement a feedback loop about the intervention to identify further measures to tackle the issue.	
	Evaluate the impact against success criteria.	

Source: IES Survey

Case Study Organisations

Case Study A: Barclays Technology Services

Background

Barclays Technology Services (BTS) is a business unit within Barclays Bank providing operational IT services both to the bank and a number of external customers. The organisation employs approximately 1,300 permanent staff, spread across a number of sites around the country. BTS is currently facing a range of challenges as an IT business, in particular the pace of change affecting the industry, the pressure of ensuring IT systems are year 2000 compliant, and a high demand for IT staff. The rate of turnover of staff in the industry is estimated as reaching 20 per cent.

BTS is implementing a programme of activities aimed at changing the culture of the organisation. The objectives of these initiatives include ensuring all employees are able to fulfil their potential, and making the organisation more effective. A working party has been set up to look at the long hours culture within the organisation and the promotion of family friendly policies. The company feels that it is not enough to have the right policies in place — changing attitudes is at least as important. The working party works closely with BTS People Management Executive Steering Committee, and makes extensive use of graduate trainees and their ideas. Some of the tasks and initiatives BTS is involved with are: promotion of flexible working; tackling the long hours culture; and changing the culture through 'Renaissance', a personal development programme.

Research conducted at BTS

IES undertook more in-depth research within BTS than in the other case study organisations. One-to-one interviews were

conducted with 12 members of staff and one senior manager, and with a manager involved with the programmes being implemented. The questionnaire was also distributed to a larger sample of employees than within the other organisations. Completed questionnaires were received from over 100 staff at BTS, representing approximately ten per cent of the workforce. Although this questionnaire was not distributed randomly, it was aimed at a cross section of staff within the organisation.

The characteristics of the sample of employees who completed the questionnaire were as follows:

- 40 per cent were female, 60 per cent male.
- More than half had dependent children or caring responsibilities for an adult.
- Half the sample were managers, a further quarter were in professional occupations, ten per cent were technicians, and ten per cent were in clerical or secretarial positions.
- Ninety five per cent of the sample worked full time.

Working long hours

Contracted hours for full-time employees at BTS are generally 35 hours per week. As shown in Table A, over 90 per cent of our sample had worked additional hours over the last three months, and one-third had worked on average more than eight additional hours. This proportion compares well with the rest of our small sample at other employers, where overall over half had worked more than an additional eight hours. We also show in Table A that at BTS directors and managers were likely to work the longest hours. This trend was confirmed by the respondents we spoke to, who felt it was senior managers who were most affected by long hours. We also show in the table that men were considerably more likely to work longer hours than females. Interviewees thought that long hours were a particular problem in certain departments or areas of the organisation: for example, those whose work was more client driven were worst affected. However, in some cases it was felt that people worked *late* hours rather than *long* hours.

In terms of when these extra hours are worked, 70 per cent of those who worked extra hours said they worked these additional hours in the early evening, around half said they worked early

Table A: Average number of extra hours worked per week, over the previous three months (per cent)

	All	Occupation			Sex	
		Director/ manager	Professional/ specialist	Staff and other	Female	Male
None	6	2	8	5	10	3
Less than four	28	16	27	58	32	26
Four to seven	35	38	35	32	39	32
Eight to 14	18	29	11	5	10	23
Over 14	14	16	19	–	10	16
N = whole sample	*103*	*45*	*37*	*19*	*41*	*62*

Source: IES Survey

mornings or lunchtimes, and one-third worked weekends or late evenings. One-third said they took work home, and ten per cent said extra hours were worked while travelling.

Almost two-thirds of the survey respondents said they were compensated for the extra hours they worked, again higher than in other organisations surveyed. Nearly two-thirds said they were compensated for all or most of the additional hours worked. For half of these, this compensation was through flexitime, others were compensated through paid overtime or time off in lieu.

There was a general consensus among respondents that long hours are sometimes necessary to complete an urgent piece of work, and this was not considered to be a problem. If there was a deadline to meet, respondents said they were prepared to work the hours required to get the work done. There was some debate, however, as to what constituted long hours. For some, more than 45 hours per week was thought to be long hours, for others it was over 55. As one respondent put it, five to seven extra hours per week was considered normal, whereas more than ten hours extra was unacceptable on an ongoing and consistent basis.

Among some staff there was a perception that working hours were reducing in the organisation. In the questionnaire survey, half said that long hours had increased in recent years.

Why BTS staff work long hours

The primary driver for working long hours at BTS was thought to be workload. Most of the respondents to the survey felt that they did not have enough time to get everything done within normal working hours. Meeting customer requirements was considered to be a particular issue. One respondent reported to us that line managers wanted staff to get the work done, and in some cases that can mean long hours. There was also a feeling that if work was not completed on time, it was difficult to catch up.

There were varying views among respondents as to whether there was a long hours culture within BTS. It appears that such a culture does exist in certain departments or parts of the organisation, but not in others. This long hours culture was described to us as an expectation to get the work done regardless of the time it takes. Peer pressure was also felt to reinforce this culture. However, some respondents felt that there was less of a long hours culture than there had been in the past. Others were of the opinion that the culture is now to work fewer hours.

The other main driver for working long hours was thought to be individual commitment to their work. Two-thirds of the respondents to the questionnaire survey felt this was a reason for working additional hours. Some respondents reported that it was their choice to work long hours. In a few cases it was thought that individuals taking things too far or being perfectionist led to working excessive long hours.

Other reasons for working long hours mentioned were:

- senior staff working long hours, and this in turn having an impact upon the hours which their staff work
- staff shortages — half of the questionnaire respondents agreed this was a driver of long hours
- the need to travel, in particular between BTS sites
- job insecurity — one-third of respondents to the questionnaire said they felt vulnerable if they did not put in as many hours as their colleagues
- career progression — some respondents were put off going for promotion because of an expectation that they would need to work long hours if they were promoted, and
- to improve pay — ten per cent of the questionnaire respondents agreed that this was a reason for working long hours.

Impact of working long hours

On individuals

Many respondents felt that working long hours would ultimately affect their health. Half of the questionnaire respondents agreed that continually working long hours affected their health. A few individuals reported that working hours had resulted in them needing to take long-term sick leave. Tiredness, irritability and anxiety were felt to be the result of working excessive hours. Long hours were also felt to impact upon individuals' family or personal lives, particularly if their work involved working away from the office. However, significantly fewer respondents to the questionnaire survey at BTS, as compared to the other companies we visited, felt that they missed important events in their personal lives because of work. Forty per cent of these BTS respondents felt that their working hours were not affecting their life outside work. The point was also made by some respondents that the extent to which long hours affect individuals depends upon lifestyle and the amount of control individuals feel they have over their working hours.

Some people were thought to enjoy working long hours and there were perceived to be difficulties for the organisation in discouraging such individuals from working long hours. However, it was felt that if some individuals worked excessive hours, it gave the wrong message to others. We were also told if individuals worked long hours, there was a danger that their job could expand as a result, by raising expectations about what can be achieved within a certain timescale.

On the organisation

A positive impact of working long hours was felt to be to meet deadlines, which helps to maintain credibility with customers. However, continually working long hours was felt to be unsustainable in the long term. Respondents reported that the impacts of long hours were: diminishing added value, inefficiency and making mistakes, which in turn affects the quality of the products produced by the organisation. It was also thought that long hours have an adverse impact on equal opportunities.

The interventions

BTS is implementing a range of initiatives aimed at changing the culture of the organisation. The initiatives most directly aimed at tackling a long hours culture are detailed below.

Tackling a long hours culture

BTS is implementing a number of measures to tackle the long hours culture.

Why

BTS recognises that a long hours culture:

- supports an unequal environment, especially where members of the workforce have outside responsibilities and are unable to commit to working long hours. The long hours culture was seen as the greatest barrier to the development of BTS's female workforce
- creates stress and has an adverse impact on health
- fails to promote the group value of helping colleagues to fulfil family and other responsibilities.

BTS also wants to ensure high staff motivation, and a long hours culture can work against this.

BTS have held three 'go home on time days'. They have also held a competition to find ideas on how to work smarter not longer. Go home on time days have been found to be successful as one-off events, but BTS recognises the need to tackle the underlying issues which lie behind a long hours culture. They have held staff workshops facilitated by external consultants on long hours. A working group is looking at how to manage time more effectively and to discuss long hours problems. BTS is not a nine to five organisation, and it is sometimes necessary to work long hours. However, the aim of these activities is to achieve a balance.

Flexible working

- **Part-time working**: All sorts of part-time hours are available to BTS staff, for example working school hours, and for all types of jobs, including senior managers. One senior executive who

worked part time before retiring, felt that part-time working had 'extended her shelf life'.

- **Flexitime**: A significant proportion of BTS staff have the opportunity to work flexibly. They have one example of a manager with children working short hours at work during the day, and then working from home in the evening once the children have gone to bed.
- **Home working**: There is some home working on an informal basis. BTS is looking at developing home working further; they have the technology in place to facilitate this, *eg* dial in computers and voice mail, and are in the process of developing a best practice guide.

Publicity

BTS see publicity and communication as vital tools to change workplace culture. Email is used to cascade information from senior management. They also communicate initiatives through the in-house magazine and the Intranet. BTS believes that cultural change can only succeed if the organisation is receptive to it. Widespread publicity for their initiatives is used to raise awareness and maintain momentum.

New business process

A new business process has been introduced, whereby people are being given clearer defined roles and the number of working days needed for projects are identified. Respondents told us that, as a result, they now feel they can refuse work if is not applicable to them. Prioritising work and the transparency about the number of days allocated to projects is also felt to be having positive benefits on hours of work.

The Renaissance programme

The Renaissance programme, which is a development programme for staff, is considered to be BTS's most significant achievement, in relation to their cultural change programme. Whereas the policies outlined above give a framework which make flexibility possible, Renaissance aims to teach the individual how to adapt and work in this new flexible environment. The programme is not primarily aimed at long hours, but the work/life balance and personal effectiveness. The

work they are doing to tackle the long hours culture is making great use of the ideas developed by this programme.

Renaissance takes a different approach to staff development and is delivered by an external training provider. The programme is designed to stimulate individuals to adopt an attitude to change by developing new skills and mind sets. The programme focuses upon individuals' life goals, their strengths and weaknesses, personal effectiveness and skills in interacting with others. It runs in three parts, and takes place over a total of five days. It takes participants through a series of activities to promote five key aspects of effectiveness: learning to learn, learning to think, learning to manage your life, learning to lead your life and learning to live your life. The emphasis is upon balance between work and home, and enabling people to live the group values and become the best they can be.

The Renaissance programme represents a large-scale investment for the organisation. At the time we conducted our survey, 500 senior managers, managers and senior technicians had been on the course. The programme began in 1996, with the executive and senior management attending the course. They began with the key people, who discovered the impact it could have on the effectiveness of the organisation. It has since been cascaded down through the organisation.

The next steps are to extend the programme to a fourth part which is likely to be a one-day workshop on time management. BTS also intend to either extend the full training programme to all staff, or elements of it to be delivered internally.

Implementation

BTS have identified a number of key aspects to the implementation of a programme like Renaissance:

- having someone who is passionate and energetic, with influence to champion the initiative
- persistence — programmes do not necessarily work immediately; the initiative needs to be adaptive
- a low profile — the profile of the Renaissance programme was kept deliberately low in case it did not fulfil its aims. There was no big launch, and expectations were not raised about the impact it could have.

- getting the support of the key people in the organisation and cascading this down for buy-in throughout the organisation.

Impact of the intervention

We have shown above that employees at BTS work fewer additional hours than the respondents to our small sample in other organisations. Results from the questionnaire survey show that staff here were much less likely to feel that long hours were part of the culture where they worked. They were also more likely to agree that BTS gave them the chance to balance work and life outside better than other organisations, and were less likely to miss important events in their personal lives because of work. Interviewees reiterated that BTS compared favourably with other employers. However, it is difficult for us to conclude that these differences are due to the initiatives being implemented. We have not conducted a before-and-after analysis. Also, we cannot analyse our questionnaire findings by those who had been on Renaissance with those who had not. However, BTS employees were positive about the steps which had been taken. Nearly one-third of respondents at this organisation reported unprompted that management was trying to do something to reduce working hours. For example:

> *'This organisation is getting far better and more focused on long hours issues and is making the effort to have a more balanced lifestyle within its staff.'*

We were told that 'go home on time' days had made employees think about why they were working late. In relation to Renaissance, those who had been on the programme reported to us that they were making a conscious effort to reduce their own hours. Renaissance participants also felt they had changed their attitude, and were achieving a better work life balance. It was found to have helped facilitate better communication within the organisation. We were told that it had engendered individual self worth, and after the course participants felt more in control of their lives. One respondent had withdrawn a job application for work elsewhere as a direct result of the course, recognising that he was happy where he was. Some had experienced difficulty sustaining the benefits of the course and felt a refresher course would be useful. Our respondents expected that the full impact of Renaissance would take five years to work through.

In some cases, staff recognised that although the intention was there within BTS to change the culture, there were difficulties involved. For some it was a resource issue that was of particular concern. Cost cutting, in particular, was felt to have an impact on workloads and consequently hours of work.

Through their own research, BTS have identified a number of impacts of the interventions they have made.

- **Work life balance**: One manager reduced his hours from 70 hours per week to 35, after going on the Renaissance programme. Renaissance has raised the issue of work life balance and the negative impact of working long hours.
- **Reduced staff turnover**: Turnover is a big issue for the industry. BTS has estimated that it can take up to nine months to recruit and get an employee up to speed, a cost which the organisation can ill afford. At BTS turnover has fallen to four per cent compared with annual staff turnover rates in the industry as a whole of up to 20 per cent.
- **Flexibility**: Women feel more able to ask for flexibility, enabling them to apply for more senior positions.
- **Team working**: As a result of the Renaissance programme, it is felt staff now work in teams more effectively.
- **Staff morale**: BTS has found that employees feel more valued, they are given more support, and there is improved morale.
- **Less hierarchical organisation**: Staff feel they can approach senior staff more easily and that BTS is a nicer place to work.
- **Introduction of principle centred leadership**: More honest and consistent management.

BTS has not been able to quantify the business benefits of the initiatives they have introduced. However, it is widely perceived that they get considerably more value out of their staff.

Case Study B: Asda Stores Ltd

Background

Asda Stores Ltd is implementing a cultural change programme. Part of this is the introduction of family friendly working practices and a move away from a long hours culture. In particular, Asda Stores Ltd has introduced 'Family Hours' a system of management rotas for departmental managers in all Asda stores. There are 20 to 25 of these managers in each store, with one general store manager.

Working long hours

The contracted hours for managers in stores is 45 hours per week. However, managers can work between 55 and 60 hours per week, with some working more than 80 hours. Many of the managers at Asda we spoke to worked on average more than 14 extra hours per week. Some said that on occasion they worked six days per week. It was felt that it was particularly difficult to take a Saturday off, and many managers regularly worked on Sundays.

Why managers work long hours

The main factors driving long hours were perceived to be as follows:

- **Extended opening hours:** Most stores are now open until 10pm on certain days, some are open until 12am, and some have 24 hour trading hours. As a result, managers' hours have increased, although the stores with 24 hour opening have night shift managers. Managers take responsibility for their departments from when the store opens to when it is closed and tend to feel they should manage through attendance, *ie* by being at work

themselves for longer hours. There was a feeling among managers we spoke with that they cannot just leave work, as there is always something else to be done. Sunday opening has also increased hours worked, and prior to the introduction of management rotas some managers were working every Sunday whereas others never did.

- **Long hours culture:** A long hours culture is prevalent among managers in retail. This is felt to be generated by individual commitment to their work, as well as peer pressure. The expectation of more senior managers, such as regional managers, that managers should put in the hours, and a perception that performance and commitment is measured on the basis of hours worked rather than effectiveness, also engenders this culture.
- **Staff shortages:** Further reasons given for working long hours related to labour turnover, a lack of key staff to whom managers can delegate, and the need to cover for sickness absence. Managers sometimes feel unable to delegate to their supervisors. There is a perception that when they leave the store there is no one 'to take the reins'. In some cases, our respondents felt this was because supervisors lack the appropriate skills and experience. In others, it was perceived to be due to supervisors being over-stretched anyway, and the need to avoid overtime. Shortcomings in managers' own management and delegation skills were also mentioned.
- **Promotions:** Managers reported that promotions, events and initiatives, which can involve targets and deadlines to meet, increased the need to work extra hours.
- **Individual commitment:** Individuals take pride in their work and there is a clear commitment among managers which leads to working long hours. Some managers prefer to work on Friday nights, Saturdays and Sundays — the busy trading days — and take their days off during the week. Our respondents also thought that managers would come into the store on their days off to check that everything was all right, and would be contactable at home if problems arose.

Impact of long hours

On individuals

Managers reported that working long hours put a particular strain on their personal relationships and personal lives. Working long shifts and weekends means that those with families seldom see their children. Managers we spoke to also felt they

had difficulties switching off and forgetting work when they were at home. Store managers are male dominated. It is felt that there are particular difficulties with working long hours for those with caring responsibilities.

On the business

In the short term, it is felt that the business benefits from the extra hours managers put in, through getting the maximum benefit from limited resources. As managers we spoke to put it, if they did not work long hours the department would not look good, the store would suffer, and ultimately the business would suffer. However, the negative impacts in the longer term have been noted. For example, the company has found that one-fifth of sickness absence is stress related and managers' absence has been increasing. It is also thought that long hours have an impact on morale and can also result in short temperedness among managers. Also, long hours do not necessarily mean the right hours are worked, *ie* if managers arrive at 7.30am and leave at 5pm, these hours do not necessarily fit with the needs of the business if 5pm is the busiest trading time.

Interventions to limit working hours

Why Asda was concerned about store managers' hours

The key driver for looking at working hours was family values and feedback from managers, a recognition of managers' problems and the effect of the difficulties they were experiencing. The business was moving in the direction of extended trading hours and on the back of that they knew a directive on working hours was coming in. Their main concern, with regard to the EC Working Time Directive, is the requirement for an 11 hour break between shifts. Prior to introducing the measures, it was felt that managers often worked a late night and then came in early the next morning. There was also concern about the impact that excessive hours was having upon sickness absence, staff morale and turnover. Patterns of work and management structures were inconsistent across stores, which could result in poor cover. One of the aims of the initiatives introduced was to bring about some consistency in these working practices between stores.

The objectives of the intervention

The main aim of the intervention was to ensure managers worked five out of seven days on a flexible basis to match the demand of the business. The objectives of the initiative were to:

- work smarter, not longer
- focus on results, not hours worked
- achieve a better balance between work and family
- retain managers through family friendly patterns of working.

What Asda did

Each store was required to sign up to 'ten commitments' to achieve these objectives. These were for managers to:

1. work to a four weekly, or three weekly, rolling rota
2. work a maximum of 45 hours per week
3. work five days out of seven, working no more than one in three Sundays
4. record working hours on the clocking-in system
5. avoid following a late night with an early start to ensure they have an 11 hour break
6. take a long weekend off after each Sunday worked
7. ensure continuity and improved communication by working Sunday and Monday after a late night on Saturday
8. work mid-shifts on Thursday and Friday to cover key trading periods
9. have full cover on Fridays
10. have late cover across all days of the week for all managers, to ensure they have contact with all members of their team and see the business at all trading times.

The management structure was also changed to ensure there was consistency across the business. Managers were divided into teams to facilitate the introduction of the rotas and ensure sufficient cover at all times. The aim was also to focus upon developing supervisors so managers would be more able to delegate.

The initiative was piloted in April 1997 and launched in September 1997.

How the intervention was introduced

A consultation process was undertaken by head office. Workshops were run within six stores to discuss what a set of 'ideal' working hours would look like, and rules which could be introduced. Rotas were drawn up on the basis of these workshops and piloted for eight weeks. Feedback from these pilots was fed into the ten commitments and rota patterns were drawn up. The rotas were intended to be implemented flexibly, individual stores could devise their own rota patterns, as long as they abided by the ten commitments.

Regional managers were briefed about the initiative. It was felt that they were the key to making the initiative work, although it was focused upon store managers. The role of the regional managers is to oversee the rotas and HR practices in their region. A briefing pack was provided for regional managers. The chief executive reiterated the messages at quarterly meetings with general store managers. The general store manager was responsible for communicating the initiative to their management team. It was their role to check that managers understood the commitments and to discuss rota arrangements in one-to-one meetings. The initiative is also kept alive by head office sending out information about it on an ongoing basis, and raising it at regional managers' meetings.

The initiative is supported by the use of a regional diary to plan all meetings, events, and training courses four to six weeks ahead, and to ensure these fit with the rotas.

Success factors

The initiative is still relatively new and has been implemented with varying success across the stores. A number of success factors contributing to the successful implementation of the 'family hours' have been identified:

- Store general managers driving and believing in the initiative; following the key principles of the rotas and adhering to the ten commitments.
- Monitoring the hours worked, and store general managers questioning why long hours are worked in one-to-one meetings with managers.
- Time management training and staff scheduling.

- Regional managers taking responsibility for checking the rotas are introduced and to ensure diary planning.
- Provision of a question and answer sheet, to cover the areas most likely to cause difficulty.
- Training up supervisors so managers can delegate.
- Time taken to consult with managers and pilot the initiative.
- The initiative was publicly given support from the very top of the organisation.
- The initiative was introduced 'for the right reasons', *ie* to fit the needs of the business.

Barriers encountered

In smaller stores in Scotland it was necessary for managers to work one in three Sundays to ensure sufficient cover.

- Resistance to change, in particular among older managers.
- Managers' desire to have the same day off each week, which is now more difficult to accommodate.
- Unpopularity of the requirement to work some more unsocial hours and a resistance to move managers' weekly meetings traditionally held on a Monday (having all managers at work on a Monday does not fit with the needs of the business, as this is a quiet trading day).

It is felt that a number of issues, such as a lack of appropriately trained supervisors, difficulties with handovers, time management and staff scheduling, have presented barriers to the successful implementation of the management rotas. These need to be addressed in order to change the culture and reduce hours. However, in order to meet the requirements of the Working Time Directive, Asda needed to introduce the rotas before these issues had been tackled. These issues are now being addressed alongside the implementation of the rotas.

The impact of the intervention

Asda is monitoring the initiative through the recording of hours and the impact has been assessed through qualitative feedback from stores, and an early evaluative questionnaire survey. This analysis has found that most managers are now recording their hours, and most stores have introduced rotas for managers.

These early findings from the evaluation also suggest that at the time of the survey, hours had been reduced, managers were working no more than five days per week and one Sunday out of three. However, not all managers were taking the required 11 hour break between shifts.

The more qualitative feedback received suggests that the culture of working long hours is beginning to be changed. Some stores feel, however, that difficulties such as staff shortages and sickness absence cause difficulty with implementing the initiative. It is felt that there are managers who remain working long hours out of their own choice, but there is a limit to the extent head office can control this kind of practice.

The initiative is being monitored on a quarterly basis and evaluated through conducting listening groups with staff.

Some of the perceived benefits for the business of introducing the management rotas are:

- ensuring there are the right people, in the right place, at the right time
- identifying the need to develop supervisors
- introducing consistency in working practices in all stores, and
- putting the structure in place to facilitate more flexible working practices.

Case Study C: MD Foods

Background

MD Foods is a multi-national dairy company, based in Denmark, with interests in the UK at various locations. MD brands include Lurpak and Danish Blue, but a large proportion of the UK output is for supermarket own brands. MD employ 2,500 staff in the UK. MD Foods have taken over a number of dairy operations in the UK. In recent years, the dairy industry has been affected by the decline of doorstep delivery, the abolition of the Milk Marketing Board, and the introduction of EU regulations. There have also been a number of technological innovations, for example the introduction of high speed filling machines. When MD Foods first took over these companies in the UK, long hours and overtime were endemic. Dairy workers needed to work long hours in order to take home a decent salary. MD Foods have introduced a system of annualised hours to address the problem.

Hours

Long hours have traditionally been a feature of the dairy industry. It was reported to us that this is due to the need to produce milk and distribute it each day by a certain time. When MD Foods began operating in the UK, operating staff were regularly working up to 70 hours per week, and during peak seasons more. Contracted hours were between 55 and 57 hours per week, with overtime on top. The management structures, working practices, and hours varied across the companies that MD Foods took over.

Before the introduction of annualised hours at MD Foods, the dairy workers worked nine-hour days, regardless of variation in the level of demand during the week. For example, Wednesdays

and Thursdays are busy days for supplying the supermarkets, and on these days there was a need for a lot of overtime; whereas during the early part of the week, there was no need to work the full nine-hour shift. To some extent individuals were also able to create their own overtime, working longer hours when they needed to supplement their income.

Annualised hours

Why annualised hours were introduced

MD Foods wanted to standardise the management structures and working practices at each of their operating sites. The Danish company recognised they had a problem in the UK with working hours which they needed to address. The introduction of annualised hours was part of a major cultural change programme. The dairies moved to being 24 hour operations and there was a need to fit staffing levels with demand to increase efficiency.

What MD Foods did

Annualised hours were introduced at MD Foods on 1 July 1997.

Annualised hours have been introduced for production, driving and despatch workers. The majority of contracts within the company are now for around 2,500 hours per annum, which is calculated to be a maximum of 48 hours per week. This ensures the company meets the requirements of the EU Directive on working hours.

MD Foods has around 1,000 staff working annualised hours. Employees are arranged into 195 groups, with 40 groups having ten or more staff. Rosters are prepared to bring staffing in line with demand. Roster patterns are drawn up for each group, using an IT system which tracks the hours. The IT system is very useful because the market place changes rapidly. The company needs a flexible system to fit the hours worked to the level of demand. Hours are recorded by swiping in on the system.

Individual employees can choose between a number of produced roster patterns, or create a pattern themselves. Staff have been shifted around to fit their own particular needs. For example, some want to work a permanent night shift, others only work

days. However, being a 24 hour, seven days a week operation, there is a degree of working unsocial hours for everyone.

A system of bank hours (excess hours) has been adopted to eliminate the overtime culture. If staff work longer than their rostered shift time, the extra hours worked are deducted from their bank hours. When shifts are shortened, the hours lost are added to an individual's bank hours. This bank hour system is closely monitored to ensure that there is never an excessive number or shortage of hours in the bank. If too few bank hours are available, extra staff are recruited. If there are too many, steps are taken to adjust the number of staff within roster groups to bring staffing in line with demand.

There is a system of green, amber and red days. Red days are rest days and holidays; amber days are for standby to cover sickness, training, and extra work as required; green days are those worked. Each member of staff has a certain number of hours allocated for training. Holidays are put into the system. There is some flexibility as to when holidays can be taken, but seven out of a team of ten, for example, cannot all go on holiday at the same time.

Staff were offered a substantial salary increase on basic pay. There is now no overtime payment but unsocial hours such as Saturday and Sunday, and night work, have already been taken into account in the salary. Salaries are now paid directly into bank accounts on a monthly basis.

For MD, annualised hours is an instrument to create a flexible work time system. This flexibility is particularly important as most of their products cannot be held as stock.

How annualised hours were implemented

An annualised hours working group was set up. This was a team of six, who besides covering the technical side, also participated in drawing up the proposals and negotiating the new agreement with the union.

In devising their own annualised hours system, MD Foods looked at systems operating in other companies. However, the system introduced needed to be tailor made. Estimates of likely levels of orders were drawn up to forecast staffing levels. This was done through liaising with operational and sales managers.

They also needed to take into account machine efficiency, the nature of the products produced, peak seasons and the skill levels of the workforce. This data is fed into the system to draw up the rosters. A number of adjustments have been made since implementation, and this ability to make such adjustments is important for the company, in order to respond to changes in the market place.

The introduction of annualised hours was debated and negotiated with the union. It was reported to us that both sides were proud of what they have achieved. Detailed information was provided about the system, so employees could compare the benefits of the new system with the old. The introduction of annualised hours was communicated to staff through, for example, videos which could be taken home to inform individuals' families about the changes. Operating staff we spoke to explained that there was no shortage of information about the new system, and that the way it would operate was explained well.

Managers were trained up on how to operate the new systems. Now when any problems arise, a paper is issued to managers. They also have quarterly reviews with the unions, and discuss any problems as they arise.

It is felt that the system is now operating well, although there were initially some teething problems which are now being ironed out. In particular, the teams are moving towards being more self managed, and roster representatives have been appointed from within the teams to plan the rotas.

Factors contributing to successful implementation

- Management working with and listening to staff.
- Improving conditions of employment: increased pay, pension provision, sick pay and reduced hours.

Impact of the intervention

On individuals

MD Foods have not measured satisfaction with the new system. However, individuals we spoke to felt they now worked far fewer hours than they used to, with more flexibility and more time for leisure activities. Also, salaries have improved hour for hour.

On the company

The new system has saved the company money, and they now have standardised working hours across the sites. The new system makes it easier to arrange training, which fits into a wider company objective to have a more highly skilled workforce. It has helped to facilitate the cultural change programme within the organisation.

Case Study D: Birds Eye Wall's

Background

This employer is a large frozen foods and ice cream producer with approximately 4,600 employees. It has four factories over the UK, all specialising in different products (*eg* meat, fish, vegetables and ice cream). It is owned by an umbrella company responsible for marketing over 1,000 brands.

The organisation prides itself on being an ethical business and caring employer. It was concerned about the impact of long working hours, the working of which was at odds with one of its stated Values — namely balancing working life with personal life. Working long hours was also raised as an issue by an increasing number of employees responding to an internal employee opinion survey. The Working Time Directive acted as a further impetus for addressing the problem.

Working long hours

Prior to implementing different working patterns, the pattern of working long hours was as follows.

Head Office

Most staff at Head Office are required to work 38 hours. Clerical and assistant managers are not paid overtime for extra hours but get time off in lieu. Management staff have informal and flexible arrangements but do not get overtime or time off in lieu. A small team of operatives which provides a site service (*eg* electricians *etc.*) work long hours (up to 60/70 hours).

The employee survey carried out in 1995 revealed that sixty per cent of managers thought they worked long hours, *eg* 15 to 20

hours longer than their contracted hours. This is particularly the case throughout the year in marketing, sales and logistics. In finance, long hours are required at month or year end.

The factories

The patterns of working long hours varied depending on the products and local culture of each factory. For example, in one factory producing ice cream, the need to work long hours was seasonal and involved peaks and troughs. Some people could double their salary in the summer period by working overtime (*eg* some employees worked 70 hours per week for ten weeks). In another factory, overtime was evenly spread but depended on products; staff worked an average of 50 hours and up to 70/80 hours when working at weekends. All factories also relied on temporary staff to meet peak demands.

Impact of working long hours

At the Centre, feedback from the opinion survey showed that 43 per cent of staff felt they were asked to work outside normal hours on too many occasions. Younger managers, in particular, commented they were missing their own time for social activities. During appraisal discussions, concerns were expressed that working long hours was affecting well being. Staff complained of being tired and demoralised by the pressure of work. This pattern seemed to be self perpetuating as they agreed they were able to work more effectively outside normal working hours. Many staff agreed that the pressure to work long hours was brought on by themselves but that senior managers set a precedent by working long hours.

Despite the fact that the organisation offers one of the highest rates of pay in the industry, many staff at the factories chose to work overtime to supplement their income. As a result, many staff were overtired. From a business viewpoint, relying on overtime was costly, resourcing was difficult to plan and organise, and did not fit in with the need for continuous operating.

Interventions to limit working hours

Interventions to limit working hours were targeted to business needs and reflected different staff groups and work locations.

Review of long hours culture at Head Office

At the Centre, the decision to address working long hours was taken at Board level. It involved the following:

- Feedback to employees that the organisation intended to address the problem.
- Including balance of work/life as part of organisational 'Values' on mission statement.
- Introducing Friday 'dress down' days and early leaving (3pm), for all staff including Board members.
- Encouraging individual action plan, reviewing workload and allocation of duty, providing additional resources if needed.
- Headcount taken off individual Directors' budgets.
- Management development to support managers in managing and developing staff.

It is too early to measure the impact of this intervention. There is still a certain amount of scepticism and management leaving early on Fridays is perceived by some as a cosmetic exercise. However, two years down the line, long hours has gone as a main dissatisfaction factor from the top of the list in the opinion survey and nobody has resigned because of excessive work pressure despite the buoyancy of the market.

Flexible continuous operations at the factories

The factories were increasingly being benchmarked with sister factories in Europe against a variety of performance measures. Continuous operations and annualised hours was identified as a key competitive advantage (which could be achieved in the UK and not in Europe) and which would improve UK performance. It also enabled the issue of long hours to be addressed. The Working Time Directive was used as a lever and is said to have been of tremendous help.

In 1996, continuous operating was negotiated and introduced at one of the factories, along with annualised hours which restricted working to an average maximum 40 hours per week, and a salaried contract with no overtime and a flexible work pattern. The organisation has learned through the experience, as this new agreement has required time to plan, introduce and implement. Notably:

- one year communication and negotiation with the union to agree a deal
- loss of earning protected for two years
- consultation with individuals and the provision of two to three months counselling if necessary to help individuals cope with the disruption to their way of life.

In another factory, a suitable shift pattern had to be found for a rather complex array of 43 different products run on either one-off or seasonal bases. Communication with the union was less well established and it took three years to agree a deal based on Flexible Continuous Operations (FCO) to keep the factory open 24 hours a day, seven days a week without overtime, to give an average working week of 40 hours. Experience gained at these factories has now been applied to other sites.

Advantages and disadvantages

The advantages of the new deal for employees are:

- higher pensionable salary leading to higher final pension
- more holidays and time off
- stability to plan their lives over a 12-month period without working excessive hours
- better shift patterns spread across day, night and weekends
- increased support by occupational health team.

The advantages for the employer are:

- meet business needs and increased efficiency
- better flexible resourcing over a year
- continuous seven days operating
- improved team working as each shift remains with the same management team
- elimination of overtime
- guaranteed weekend working and cover.

Disadvantages reported by the employees are:

- lack of communication with colleagues on other shifts
- 12 hour shifts and varied shift patterns difficult to get used to and very tiring

- the need to adapt new working patterns to life outside and learn to cope with additional time off
- no opportunity to boost pay with overtime
- lack of employee control, regimental and inflexible
- holidays planned on a five year cycle and difficult to swap with other staff
- shift patterns fit with job share rather than part-time work
- affect social life and the pursuit of outside interest.

Main success factors

The organisation considers that these interventions have on the whole been successful and identify the following steps as necessary requirements for success:

- consult widely via staff briefings at all locations
- be prepared to have lengthy negotiation with the union if necessary
- provide support and counselling to staff to help with changes, and address people's fear on an individual basis
- develop family friendly policies (*eg* carer support, family and emergency leave)
- establish contacts with local external agencies (*eg* social services)
- be aware that you may need to formalise occupational health department role and increase its capacity (for example one sister, five nurses, one occupational health adviser, and one part-time company doctor doing home visits)
- monitor and control absenteeism as there is a risk it may increase in the short term as staff get used to the new working pattern
- periodically review how shift patterns are working in practice and renegotiate if necessary
- evaluate potential impact on employees (*eg* seek regular feedfack via staff surveys; participate in external occupational health research, *etc.*).

Case Study E: Halifax Estate Agencies Ltd

Background

Halifax is the largest mortgage lender in the UK, with two and half million borrowers and mortgage assets of over £80 billion.

In June 1997 the Halifax became a PLC. It now has around four million shareholders. Established over 140 years ago, it has relationships with over 20 million customers.

The Halifax offers a wide range of financial services alongside their more traditional services as mortgage lenders and as an estate agent (Halifax Estate Agents Ltd). This has changed the nature of the job for staff by making it more complex as staff are required to be 'multi-skilled'.

Halifax Estate Agencies Ltd operates out of just over 600 branches. Turnover is very high, as it is for the industry as a whole. Main reasons for the high turnover is the long hours. Estate agency is notoriously associated with aggressive selling as staff are required to meet demanding sales targets. The pressure to meet targets is continuous.

The employer recognises that there is a problem with working hours and has recently taken some steps to try to address the problem. Also, the employer has been changing the culture from the traditional view of estate agents of the 'white socks brigade of the 1980s', to sales staff who enjoy dealing with people and are 'customer focused'.

Working hours

Working long hours is a feature of Halifax Estate Agencies. This culture is acknowledged both by the employer and by staff.

With respect to the contractual hours, there appeared to be a considerable discrepancy between the number of hours which staff considered that they were contracted to work and the hours which the employer considered staff to be working. The small group of staff we surveyed considered that the contractual hours were 47/48 hours per week, while the employer considered it to be 37½ hours.

Most staff were thought to be working long hours regularly, in particular those staff involved in valuing property, listing property, sales staff and those dealing with the provision of mortgages.

According to our survey, extra hours are worked during the early morning, the lunch hour and during the evening. Staff also work on Saturdays. In some branches, staff are expected to work every Saturday, while in others they are able to work alternative Saturdays. Staff are not compensated for working Saturdays.

One interviewee considered that 55 hours was about the average weekly working hours for estate agents. However, this appeared to differ depending on the location of the branch. Evidently, major towns and cities had greater customer demand for their services than some of the smaller towns.

Data from our survey revealed that half of those who were interviewed were working in excess of eight hours extra each week each on average over the last three months. Almost all of them reported that they had worked long hours on most days over this period.

Reasons for working long hours

The reasons for working long hours among estate agents were considered to be:

- **Meeting customer demand**: The peak times for demand for their services are before the normal working day begins and after it has finished. Consequently, this has an impact on the hours which staff work, as they have to be available to meet customer needs in order to meet their targets.
- **Competition**: As the business operates in a highly competitive environment, they try to remain open for longer so that they can out-do their competitors.

- **Meeting targets**: Employees work long hours as they are under pressure to meet their targets. Moreover, their pay is dependent on these targets.
- **Staff shortages**: Staff shortages were also mentioned as affecting employees' working hours within the company.
- **Peer pressure**: To some extent staff were unwilling to leave work earlier than their colleagues for fear of comments being made.

Attitude to working long hours by managers

Managers' attitudes/recognition to staff who are working long hours was considered to be important. Staff felt that they were valued when their manager had praised them and allowed them to take time off in lieu. Essentially, some degree of flexibility with respect to working hours from both the employee and the manager was considered to be needed in order to get the maximum from staff.

However, there appeared to be variations between branches to the extent to which managers were either willing to/able to allow some degree of flexibility with respect to working hours of employees.

Another contributing factor to the long hours culture is the extent to which managers work long hours. One member of the group felt that as her manager worked long hours, staff in her branch felt obliged to do the same.

Impact of working long hours

Overall the impact of working long hours on *staff* was considered to be negative:

- **Personal life**: It was evident that working long hours was having an impact on employees' personal life. One interviewee who had children felt under some pressure. Working long hours also appeared to be preventing staff from pursuing leisure activities, partly because they got home too late and partly because they felt physically too tired. Staff also commented that they did not have time to have a social life.
- **Health**: One interviewee noted that the long hours which she had been working were beginning to affect her health. She stated that she had started to get illnesses like tonsillitis which she had never suffered from before.

- **Performance**: As the job primarily depends on the sales ability of the employee, if the employee becomes over-tired it directly affects sales figures as they are unable to give the best of themselves. In addition, being overworked was also thought to result in staff making mistakes, for example forgetting appointments.

The overall impact of working long hours on the *organisation* was also thought to be negative:

- **Diminishing returns to productivity:** The productivity of the employee over time was thought to be affected, and this ultimately affected the business.
- **Poorer quality service:** It was also considered that staff would offer a poorer quality service which could also be damaging to the company operating in a competitive environment.
- **Recruitment and retention problems**: The long hours culture of the business was considered to be the key factor contributing to the high turnover and recruitment problems within the company.

Support to limit working hours

The employer has acknowledged that there is a problem of working long hours within the estate agency side of the business and is hoping to change the culture. The employer would like managers and staff to operate more flexibly. For example, if the manager finds that there is not much demand to be open late then the outlet should close earlier. Moreover, if business is quiet during the week then staff should be able to take their 'lieu' days. The focus is to get the most out of staff during busy periods by allowing them to rest during quiet periods.

Hence, personnel has been encouraging and equipping/training managers to plan more effectively their use of staff time. Managers are encouraged to allow staff to take time off during quiet times and retain staff during busy times. Managers are also encouraged to determine their opening hours in line with customer demand.

So far, the southern region has reviewed and reduced its opening hours. In February 1997 the opening hours were reduced from 6.30pm to 6pm. In addition, some branches, depending on customer demand, have also been closing on bank holidays and over the Christmas period.

The employer is also introducing new technology to the business which they consider will also help staff to 'work smarter'. The Halifax are currently piloting some systems.

It was recognised that the pay system would also need to be reviewed, as working additional hours in order to meet targets and gain larger bonuses was a key factor contributing to the long hours culture.

Evaluation of the steps which have been taken so far to address the problem of long hours

Overall, reducing opening hours by half an hour was welcomed by staff as a positive step, and was considered to have improved morale. The more cynical view which was taken was that the employer had reduced opening hours to compensate staff for the freeze on pay rises.

While it appeared that some branches were becoming more flexible about the working hours of their employees it was not evident that the employer's view of encouraging greater planning and allowing staff to take time off during quiet times had been made explicitly clear to staff. Some members of staff had noted that there were occasions when it was quiet where potentially they could slack off from their duties. However, it had not occurred to them that this was an opportunity which was open to them.

While employees felt that they would like to see working hours reduced further, there appeared to be an acceptance that working long hours was the nature of the job and that nothing could be done about it. Staff did not feel that the employer would attempt to cut working hours any further. The main barrier was considered to be the competitive industry within which the company was operating. Essentially, taking further steps to reduce working hours would mean that the company would face a loss in business.

Appendix: Summary of the Main Requirements of the WTD

Coverage

The regulations apply to workers over the minimum school leaving age. The definition of workers covers those with a contract of employment who undertake work under other forms of contract (*eg* agency and temporary workers, freelancers *etc.*) but does not cover the self employed. There are some special provisions for young workers, over the minimum school leaving age but under 18.

Weekly working hours limit

The regulations set a limit of an average of 48 working hours per week, including overtime. The averaging time is taken over a rolling 17 week reference period. For workers just hired who have not yet worked 17 weeks, the reference period is the time since employment began.

Time keeping and records

Employers must maintain up-to-date records of employees' times worked and their written agreements. A Health and Safety Executive inspector may inspect employer records upon request. All such records must be kept for up to two years.

Measures relating to night time working

- Night workers are subject to a limit of an average of eight hours in each 24 hour period. The standard averaging period is four months.

- Night workers whose work involves special hazards or heavy physical or mental strain, are subject to an eight hour limit for each 24 hour period.
- Night workers are entitled to a free health assessment at regular intervals.
- An employer can assign night time work to an employee who normally does daytime work only, if the employee has a free health assessment.
- If a medical practitioner decides that the night worker is at risk because of the nature of their work, the employer must transfer the employee to other duties to exclude the risk.

Weekly rest periods

- An adult worker is entitled to an uninterrupted rest period of not less than 24 hours in each seven day period.
- A young worker is entitled to a 48 hour rest period during each seven day period.

Daily rest periods

Adult workers are entitled to 11 hours consecutive rest per day. Young workers are entitled to 12 hours consecutive rest per day.

Rest breaks

Adult workers are entitled to a minimum 20 minute rest break if their working day is longer than six hours. Workers can spend this break away from their workstation. Young workers are entitled to a minimum 30 minute rest break if they work for longer than four and a half hours.

Paid annual leave

Employees are entitled to three weeks paid annual leave, beginning on or before 23 November 1998, rising to four weeks after 23 November 1999. Leave days cannot be carried over to the next year.

Exclusions and derogations

- **Excluded sectors:** The maximum weekly working time, night work, daily and weekly rest, rest breaks and annual leave regulations are not applicable to mobile workers involved in transport (by air, rail, road, sea, inland waterways and lake); sea fishing; other work at sea; armed forces, police and civil protection services, such as fire and ambulance; and doctors in training. However, the European Commission hopes to extend the Working Time Directive to cover these areas.
- **Unmeasured working time:** Workers whose working time is not measured and/or predetermined, or can be determined by themselves, are exempt from the maximum weekly working time, night-time regulations, and daily and weekly rest breaks. Examples include managing executives, others with autonomous decision-making powers, workers officiating at religious ceremonies, and family workers.
- **Other exemptions:** The following categories of workers are exempted from night-time working, daily and weekly rest and rest breaks:
  - employees who travel between different places of work for one employer
  - security and surveillance staff who must remain in one place to protect property and people, as for security guards and caretakers
  - employees who have surges of activity such as agriculture, tourism and postal services
  - where there are unusual or unforeseen circumstances, including accidents or risks of such, beyond an employer's control
  - employees who ensure continuity of a service or production, as in the case of:
    - hospitals, prisons and residential institutions for treatment, care or reception of people
    - work at docks and airports
    - in the media, cinema production, postal and telecommunication services
    - gas, water and electricity, refuse collection
    - industries where work cannot be interrupted for technical reasons
    - research and development activities
    - agriculture

- **Employer/workforce agreements:** Exemptions can be made through collective agreements with an independent trade union. 'Workforce' agreements can be made with workers where there is no recognised trade union. However, collective agreements cannot alter the 48 hour rule.
- **Individual employee agreement to exclude the maximum:** An employee can agree with their employer in writing that she or he will work more than 48 hours. The agreement may include a time period. An employee can terminate the agreement at any time unilaterally by giving her or his employer not fewer than seven days' notice in writing."

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Breaking the Long Hours Culture

J Kodz, P Kersley, H Strebler, S O'Regan

In 1 in 3 organisations in the UK employees work more than ten hours over and above their contracted hours. This is not an occasional effort to cope with emergencies or peak periods, but rather a regular event. The European Community's Working Time Directive has focused our attention on the matter of long hours. The fundamental business issue is not how best to circumvent the directive. Rather, it is to understand the causes of long hours, note their consequences, and devise policies to ameliorate them. At heart, long hours working is a cultural attitude and the example is often set by senior management.

This timely report, supported by the IES Research Club of leading UK employers, includes case studies from five major organisations.

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